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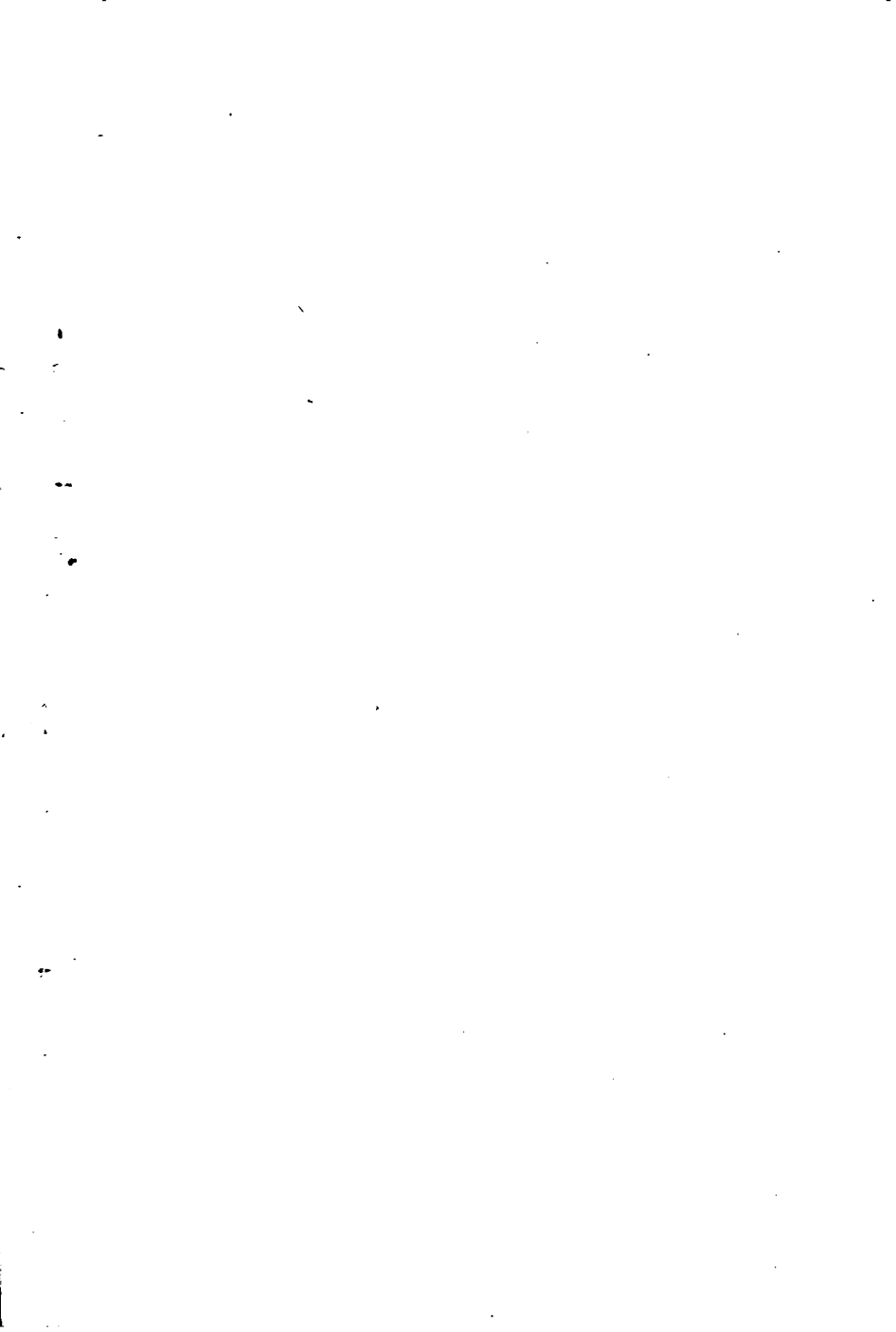
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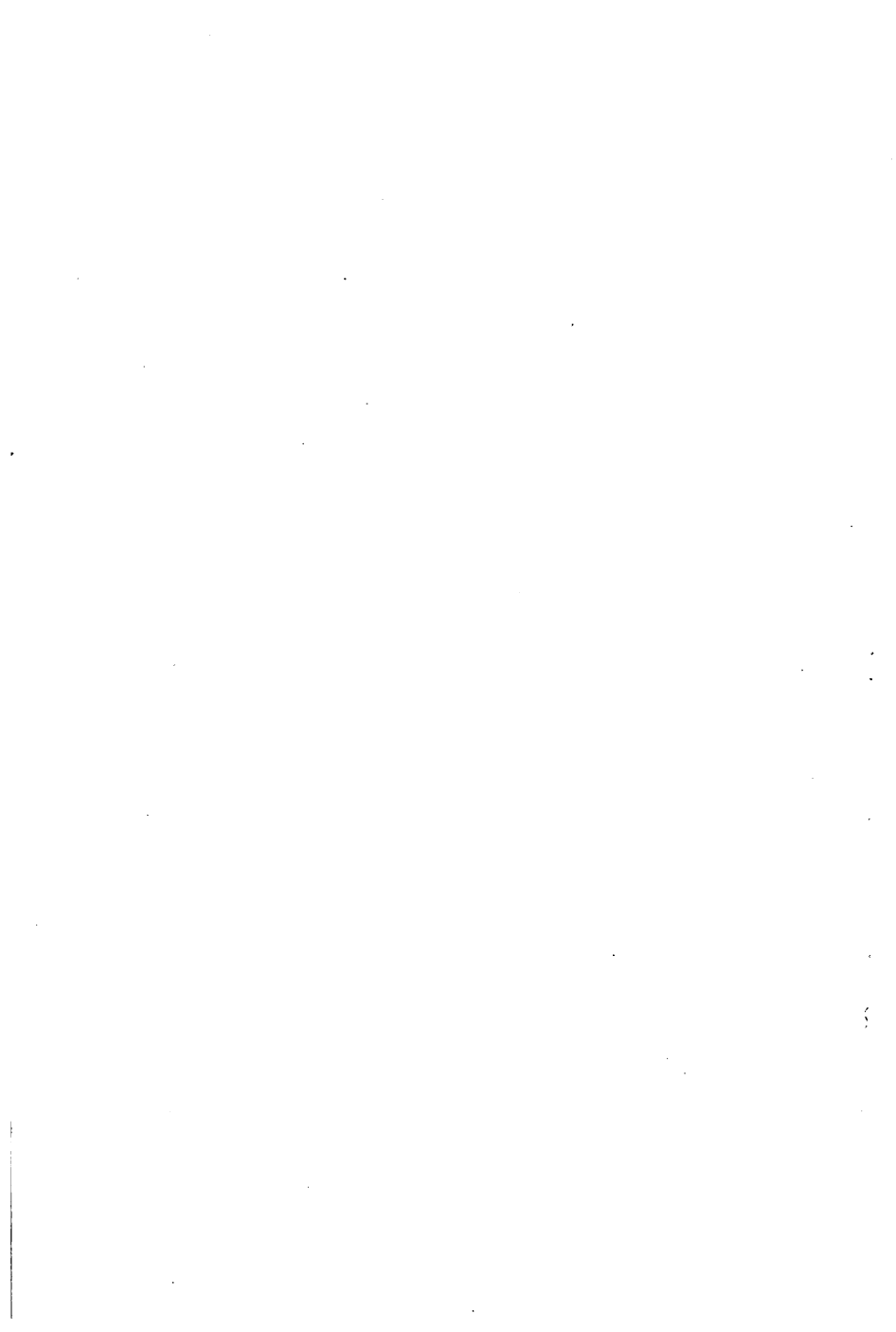
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OUR KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST
AN HISTORICAL APPROACH

BY

LUCIUS HOPKINS MILLER

Professor of Biblical Instruction, Princeton University. \$1.00 net.

Discusses the sources of our information regarding Christ, His life, teaching and Divinity.

"The reverence of faith is blended with the freedom of the scholar. Admirable."—DEAN HODGES in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

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BERGSON AND RELIGION

BY

LUCIUS HOPKINS MILLER

Assistant Professor of Biblical Instruction in
Princeton University



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PREFACE

As the reader will quickly see, this is not primarily a book on philosophy, but a book on religion. Otherwise the writing of it should have been left to a philosopher, and that I do not pretend to be. Still, the ground covered lies between the two subjects (or, rather, overlaps both) and might therefore be considered open to occupancy by students of either subject. Theoretically, there is no reason why a philosopher's religious deductions should be any more reliable than the philosophical descriptions of a student of religion, for just as philosophy has its intricacies so religion also has its subtleties, and the subtleties of religion can be caught only through that insight which is bestowed by an intimate historical understanding. In this task the application of philosophical criteria may harm as well as help.

It is commonly thought, however, that the philosopher has more right in the field of religion than the student of religion has in the field of philosophy, and I must admit that,

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judging by past performance, there is ground for this opinion. It is generally true that the philosopher is more at home in religion than the student of religion is in philosophy. I do not think that he should be, but he undoubtedly has been. However, I have noticed among philosophers the marked habit of carrying the metaphysical "big stick" wherewith to beat into subjection recalcitrant facts of religious history and psychology. This will not do, even though it is a natural tendency and very hard to avoid. Because it is so hard for the philosopher to resist this temptation, and because the student of the history of religion is likely to be more scientifically respectful in dealing with religious facts, there is much to be said for "a fair field and no favor" when a proposed discussion necessarily involves both subjects. I trust that in the philosophical parts of this study philosophers may not find the presentation inadequate or mistaken. I have at least tried, as best one may, to rid myself of prejudice and to present the facts exactly as they lie.

To obviate possible misunderstanding let me state definitely what my plan is. It is not

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my aim to give a complete picture of Bergson's thought, nor is it my purpose to criticise his work. These things belong to philosophical specialists and they have been taken care of in adequate fashion. The religious effects of this important phase of recent thought have not been adequately dealt with hitherto, and this fact constitutes the *raison d'être* of the book. To discuss these effects satisfactorily I have been obliged to present, as briefly as clearness would permit, the outstanding emphases of Bergson's position. This, and this alone, is what I have tried to do in the philosophical portions of what follows.

The problem may be put thus: If Bergson's doctrine be completely accepted, what results for religion? The reader will soon discover that I sympathize with the teaching of Bergson at many points, both on philosophical and on religious grounds, but there are also elements in his system which I find difficult to accept. In other words, I am not a Bergsonian. But, among other things, I agree with Bergson in this, that the discovery of the whole truth of the universe is not the task of any one man. It requires the work of many men

and many minds to win those approximations to truth which are open to mortal beings. Nevertheless, Bergson has struck a vein, glistening and valuable, from which much pure and precious metal may be mined. This is particularly true for the student of religion and, through him, for religious leaders and the rank and file of the laity. At least this is my firm conviction, a conviction that has arisen and matured through a study of Bergson which was begun without any presuppositions, purely out of a general desire for information, and without any idea of writing a book. The thinking world is weary of negations. It is even more weary of dogmatic assertions. It must *know*, but it wishes also to *believe*. Bergson teaches us that we may believe without blinking the facts, and this, I take it, is the bottom-most yearning of the educated world today. I may add that Bergson is the outstanding literary exponent of those new, virile, constructive forces which are manifesting themselves so conspicuously in the bearing of France at the present moment. No one can fully understand the spiritual background of the present situation without knowing what Bergson and

others like him have been contributing towards a revival of faith among Frenchmen.

I do not maintain that the religious inferences I have drawn from Bergson's thought are all that might conceivably be drawn, nor do I deny that other and different conclusions might consistently be reached. I do hold that the religious consequences indicated in this book are not only compatible with Bergsonian doctrine but are also those towards which his thinking most clearly points. We know very little about Bergson's own religious views, but he has conditionally promised to enlighten us later. Interesting and important as this information will be, it is not an essential matter. The effect of a man's thought goes out beyond him and beyond his power of control, and it is conceivable that it may traverse legitimate paths that are quite different from those which he himself may wish to mark out for it. I shall be surprised, however, if the ultimate publication of Bergson's conception of religion does not reveal a viewpoint which will justify the conclusions of this book.

In any case, I can say with earnestness that Bergson has thrown light for me upon several

puzzling religious questions, and the result has been a quickened appreciation of certain fundamental religious truths and a greater desire to experience their benefits. Some of these truths, interpreted in the light of Bergson, reveal anew the fact that orthodox religionists have often obstructed their own path. Others show, with a new clarity, who the age-old enemies of religion really are. The result reminds one of the parable of the householder who brings out of his store things old and things new. And that is what we are all seeking, a result that includes a belief in the goodness of the old wine without thereby denying the possibility of new vintages of new and satisfying flavor. These too may yield pure, unadulterated wine. In other words, if "God is in His heaven," all has not yet been given to the world, and we of the latter days may share with our forefathers the zest of quest, discovery, and creative evolution, even in religion.

I have not deemed it necessary to append a bibliography of the well-nigh two hundred books, articles, and reviews—French, German, and English—which have been consulted in the

preparation of this book. A goodly number of these are referred to in the notes. An excellent bibliography is to be found in the English edition of *Time and Free Will* (1910), and another has been published separately by the Columbia University Library (1913). More recent literature can be found by consulting the various philosophical reviews.

Chapters I and V have already appeared as articles in the *Biblical World* and in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, respectively. I am indebted to the editors of these publications for their kind permission to reprint these articles here.

I wish to thank my colleagues, Professor Roger Bruce Cash Johnson, Professor Charles G. Osgood, and Professor Edward Gleason Spaulding, for their kindness in reading parts of the manuscript, and for valuable criticism and suggestions.

LUCIUS HOPKINS MILLER.

*Princeton, New Jersey,
February, 1916.*

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BERGSON AND RELIGION

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

THE motto prefixed by Pogson to his English translation of Bergson's *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*¹ is the following characteristic quotation from Plotinus:

If a man were to inquire of Nature the reason of her creative activity, and if she were willing to give ear and answer, she would say: "Ask me not, but understand in silence, even as I am silent and am not wont to speak."

This is, of course, a half-truth, but that half-truth may help to carry us into the very depths of the Bergsonian position. The words of Plotinus have in them a touch of fundamental religious feeling, and if, in any real sense, Bergson's thought pursues the path of "understanding silence," we may expect to find in that thought definite religious implications. If that is so, Bergson should be of in-

¹ English title, *Time and Free Will*.

terest to all who believe in the significance of religion.

To be sure, Bergson's thought may, and indeed it does, suggest religious implicates which are at variance with widely accepted interpretations of the religious life. But for one who believes in the reality of a progressive revelation of God in human history—and is this not biblical and Christian?—departure from existing *forms* of faith will not necessarily disturb fundamental faith itself. Mere change of air is often invigorating. There is such a thing as a healthy mental disturbance, for mental peace and placidity are often only the precursors of spiritual slumber. To those who wish to maintain a religion of mere peace and placidity, if such a thing be possible, I would suggest that they shun the influence of Bergson's philosophy. Set and final forms, rigid and unchanging formulations, do not flourish in its atmosphere.

On the other hand, Bergson strikes certain notes which harmonize with age-old religious themes. Many thinkers object to him because, as they say, he is too old-fashioned; because he merely voices in new form ideas which are too

old to be any longer regarded—Heracleitan ideas, neo-Platonic ideas; because he resurrects conceptions which have been conclusively disproved, as, for example, the independent existence of the soul and the possibility for man of at least a modicum of absolute knowledge. These conflicting opinions whet curiosity, and one wonders whether this philosophy may not contain new values for religious thought, especially in a day when men are longing as much as ever for the great religious verities but are often unable to find them satisfactorily in orthodox forms of interpretation.

Thus far, comparatively little attention has been paid to the religious aspects of Bergson's thought. A few books and articles discuss this question, but they are without exception either haphazard in method or otherwise unsatisfactory.² Naturally enough, most of the

² Among others, compare the following: E. Hermann, *Eucken and Bergson: Their Significance for Christian Thought* (Boston); A. S. Mories, "Bergson and Mysticism," *Westminster Review* (June, 1912); Underhill, "Bergson and the Mystics," *Living Age* (March 16, 1912); MacIntosh, "Bergson and Religion," *Biblical World* (January, 1913); Gerrard, "Bergson, Newman and Aquinas," *Catholic World* (March, 1913); Douglas, "Christ and Bergson," *North American Review* (April, 1913); E. LeRoy, *A New Philosophy*; *Henri Berg-*

literature dealing with Bergson has consisted of reviews, criticisms, and expositions of his philosophy as such. This emphasis still continues in spite of the feeling of surfeit which is beginning to manifest itself. This monotonous repetition of description has had its value, however, in extending to wider and wider circles an acquaintance, however superficial, with this philosophy. But even lay readers are now beginning to ask what bearing, if any, this new method of viewing the universe may have upon religious thought.

Another reason for the comparative lack of religious emphasis in the literature of the subject is the fact that Bergson does not anticipate himself. He has promised us for the days to come a discussion of both religion and ethics, provided he feels when the time comes that his results in these directions contribute something new to human thought. He is careful

son (1913); K. Bornhausen; "Die Philosophie Henri Bergsons und ihre Bedeutung für den Religionsbegriff," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (1910); Charles Corbière, "Le dieu de M. Bergson," *Revue de théologie et des questions religieuses* (March, 1910); A. Joussain, *Romantisme et religion* (Alcan, Paris, 1910); C. Coignet, *De Kant à Bergson. Reconciliation de la religion et de la science dans un spiritualisme nouveau* (Alcan, Paris, 1911)..

and conservative in what he publishes and has himself said that much of his work has never reached the light of publication because the results were inconclusive. His own words are:

Throughout my philosophical career I have never felt that I was under the obligation of writing a book. Many of the lines of investigation which I pursued led me nowhere, and I did not think it necessary to give the world "news from nowhere." It was only when I reached a positive answer to a question that I embodied it in a book.

I still feel the same way. If my studies of ethics and religion do not throw new light upon these vexed problems, I will not encumber the world with an additional book. But if my method enables me to grasp certain aspects of the problem which have eluded others, I shall endeavor to make others see the things which I saw.³

Bergson may come to a negative conclusion regarding the publication of his religious and ethical researches, but I do not think this is likely to be the case. On occasion he has made specific references to these questions and in a

³ Dr. Louis Levine's interview with Bergson. Cf. the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

sympathetic tone. For instance, Levine's interview, just quoted, contains these statements also:

. . . the craving for religious experience will remain and probably grow stronger as time goes on. The religious feeling [in Professor Bergson's philosophical interpretation] is the sense of not being alone in this world, the sense of a relationship between the individual and the spiritual source of life.

And again:

. . . . This source of life is undoubtedly spiritual. Is it personal? Probably. . . . of course, personal in a different way, without all those accidental traits which in our minds form part of personality and which are bound up with the existence of the body. But personal in a larger sense of the term—a spiritual unity expressing itself in the creative process of evolution.

Useful as these statements are, they are at best merely straws indicating which way the wind is blowing. At the present time, if one is to characterize the religious effects of Bergson's thought, he must do it chiefly by means of inferences drawn from the main emphases of the philosophy. These emphases can be determined with sufficient certainty, and it is as

legitimate as it is interesting and valuable to discuss tentatively the relation of these emphases to religious thought and life.

The imagination of the educated world has been fired by this man; especially in France, of course, but only less so in England and in America. He has many admirers in Italy and in other countries, and even Germany, wedded as she is to her own processes of thought, has recognized his significance. The modernists in Europe, particularly in France, are turning to Bergson for inspiration and support. On the social side, the syndicalists are appealing to him and, whether rightly or wrongly, are finding in his philosophy a *point d'appui* for their own views regarding the social order.

More generally, thinking people throughout the civilized world have come to realize that here is a new force to be reckoned with, a new view to be seriously considered. Leaders of thought have long since recognized that there has not yet been time in which mentally to digest the mass of new facts brought to light by scientific investigation. Those who know the history of human thought and the circum-

stances which give rise to new philosophies have realized that the time was ripe for an attempt to reassess the meaning of life in the light of the new knowledge. Even the rank and file of men, who necessarily lag behind and gather up the crumbs which fall from the tables of the masters, have come to feel that a new interpretation of life was due. Many have been looking in eager expectancy for such an interpretation in the hope that old values might be conserved while forms and interpretations more suited to the temper and information of the age were being wrought out. Thus, whether attracted or repelled, all informed men are at least curious regarding this new philosophy. It is therefore a pertinent and a timely matter to attempt to decide what its religious values may be.

.

The kind and degree of interest one has in a task of this sort depend upon the theory one holds regarding the relation of philosophy and religion to one another. One may start with the presupposition that philosophy is the be-all and end-all of any attempt to unify the ap-

parently conflicting facts of human existence; that one must first have a complete philosophy of the universe before he can begin to discuss the question of religion. For such a man philosophy determines religion and the latter must ever be subservient to the former.

This is what the Hegelians have generally done and, it must be admitted, with great success, if the size and quality of a following are tests of success. One has but to read Edward Caird's *Evolution of Religion* to see this point of view at its best. Here evolutionary idealism is the key used with a sure and clever hand to unlock the door to the mysteries of religious truth and history. I may remark in passing that when the door is opened, in the case of Caird at least, we are led directly to Christianity as the goal of all our seeking. Of course, for those who think in this way, who believe that philosophy should dominate religion, there is little use in discussing the religious value of a philosophy until they have settled the one all-important and prior question: "What philosophy should be espoused?" The primary interest of such men is in the comparison of philosophies, in order to determine

that philosophy to which one should yield adherence. When that adherence is achieved, it is merely a question of determining the kind of religion which such a philosophy may allow or suggest. A discussion of the religious values of other philosophies becomes, in this instance, a more or less idle and academic discussion.

On the other hand, there are those who hold that it is religion which necessarily determines one's philosophy. We need not here take into account the "man on the street." Such a man may have his philosophy, but it is necessarily crude and undeveloped. If he is a religious "man on the street," he will more than likely be suspicious of all philosophy on the general and not wholly despicable supposition that all intellectual speculation regarding supermundane matters is profitless, or worse. There are, however, large sections of the religious world in which, because of certain historical processes, religion has come to exercise a dominant authority over philosophy. The Roman Catholic position is the best illustration of this, although this point of view is not at all limited to Roman Catholics. Protestant

theologians also have held that only one form of philosophical thought was consistent with Christian revelation—a philosophy necessarily determined, so they thought, by the character of that revelation.

This tendency, at least so far as Roman Catholics are concerned, is due to a historical development, through which, as a matter of fact, philosophy first impressed the iron heel of its authority upon religion. The vogue of Aristotle in the mediæval world, especially from the time of Thomas Aquinas, established a connection between the Aristotelian philosophy and the Christian religion which still persists in the Roman Catholic Church and seems well-nigh unbreakable. The modernist movement continues its nibbling process, but there does not seem to be any likelihood of its producing an immediate effect upon the great mass of Roman Catholic thinkers. Of course, these thinkers now believe that their philosophy is as divine and as unassailable as Christian revelation itself and, from a very early time after the Aristotelian conquest of the Church, the exponents of orthodox theology have believed that this philosophy

inescapably follows from the religion. This means that to be a Christian in religion is necessarily to be an Aristotelian in philosophy. The traditional dogmas of the Church, largely Augustinian, were fitted into the Aristotelian framework by Aquinas in such a way that the two elements became fused and the aegis of revelation and of Church authority was thrown over both alike. Thus Roman Catholic theologians have come to think that philosophy is necessarily subservient to religion; that there is only one philosophy capable of this supreme submission, the revealed Aristotelianism; that all other philosophies are anathema. These theologians represent a power too strong and too extensive to be ignored.

For such men also a discussion of the religious significance of a philosophy is an idle discussion, unless it be a discussion of the religious implicates of *the* philosophy—the philosophy which, as they fondly think, religion necessarily dictates to the believer. Indeed, such thinkers would go further and brand such an attempt with the marks of skepticism and infidelity, because there can be only one philosophy and that philosophy is the *divine*

philosophy—the only one which is consistent with divinely revealed religion.⁴

The charming or, as some would prefer to have it, the distressing variety of man's mental operations finds one of its best illustrations in the subject now before us. After leaving our Catholic friend, who insists upon the essential connection between religion and philosophy—and a particular philosophy at that—we soon traverse the path of other friends quite different. In the homes of these people also Religion is a welcome guest, but welcome because of her own innate charm. She does not need the more sophisticated Dame Philosophy to announce her entrance into the drawing-room. She does not ask or wish the worldly-wise Queen of the Sciences to stand at her elbow and suggest the next proper step. She moves through the homes of men with the sure grace of unconscious simplicity. In fact, according to these friends, Dame Philosophy should be barred the door. She has been such a disturbing factor at previous gatherings that

⁴ The Aristotelianism of Roman Catholic thinkers contains within itself the principle by which the Church justifies the contention that there is no other philosophy. Hence the unbreakable circle of thought in which Catholic theologians move.

her presence is no longer desirable or permissible.

Christianity is an inductive religion and Christian theology must take on an inductive character. Fact and not theory is the important thing and speculation should be disowned. We are living in an inductive age which yields easily to agnosticism, and if we are to present religion to such an age in any effective manner we must adapt our religious interpretation to the inductive method and the agnostic temper.

According to Ritschl, whom we may take as the best example of this tendency in current thought, reason and faith must be separated—philosophy and religion kept apart. As Edghill says, Ritschl held that “. . . the conclusions of practical religion are supposed to be independent of and irreconcilable with the results of the theoretic reason . . . reality is unknowable by way of metaphysics . . . [there is] a line of absolute demarcation between religious and theoretic knowledge.”⁵ And Hermann has said, “It makes no difference to a Christian whether philosophically he

⁵ E. A. Edghill, *Faith and Fact: A Study of Ritschlianism*.

is a materialist or an idealist.”* It should be added that this position is of a kind to appeal to “the man on the street.” What he wants is practice, not theory, of course. What he is after is results, no matter how they come or how their coming may be metaphysically explained. Thus, among average people as well as among the intellectual “quality,” this anti-metaphysical metaphysics has an imposing following.

One is tempted to tarry and discuss the validity of this position in itself; to ask whether our knowledge can thus be placed in two or more water-tight compartments; to discuss whether judgments of value may legitimately eliminate judgments of fact, judgments of existence. But we must not stop. The discussion would not be pertinent for present purposes. What we need to realize at this point is merely this: for such as the Ritschlians, at least so far as they personally are concerned, our question is once more an idle one.

* Quoted by Edghill, *op. cit.* One must remember, however, that there are Ritschlians and Ritschlians. Ritschl himself was not consistent in this matter of the relation of religion to metaphysics, and there are striking differences between the position of Hermann, for instance, and that of such men as Kaftan and Harnack.

I mean the question of the religious value of a given philosophy. A *given* philosophy has no religious value because philosophy as such has no religious value. Men who wish to keep young that way may, if they like, gambol in metaphysical meadows and emit philosophical pipings. The Ritschlian is rather inclined to think such an attempt at a renewal of youth will prove disappointing. The way of life is not there. Reality is not in it. It is all darkness, fog, uncertainty. If you want youth and life, come over into the fair fields of religion. Drop your metaphysics and renew your faith, hope, and love at religion's fount. Give over your attempt to secure religious values from philosophy, or even to assess philosophy's religious value. It has none.

Needless to say, this book will not interest such men except that men of all schools of thought are alike in this, at least, that their ears itch to hear what others say about them. As for the subject itself, there is nothing in it. It is a no-thing.

.
In considering the foregoing positions I have already given by implication that view of

the relation between religion and philosophy which commends itself to me as most reasonable and true. To say that philosophy determines religion is, in the long run, to eliminate religion in favor of philosophy; it is to turn religion into philosophy. Still, we may reassure ourselves with Lincoln's reminder, in his famous sheep anecdote, that "calling a tail a leg doesn't make it one." On the other hand, to think that religion can determine, or ever has determined, philosophy is merely to misread and misinterpret the history of human thought.

Those, no doubt, are nearer the truth who say that the two—philosophy and religion—move in different spheres and do not touch. They would be still nearer the truth, I think, did they grant some measure of contact or influence, even while insisting upon a real independence. That many men today, overborne by the inductive method of modern science and the temptation to agnosticism, are unable to react spontaneously to the appeal of metaphysics, may argue a defect in them quite as easily as it may indicate unreality and impracticality in metaphysical effort.

That religious faith is generated apart from metaphysics, at least of a formal or conscious sort; that religion is in a very real sense a scion of the House of Humanity, quite as old and quite as independently worthy of consideration as philosophy—these are statements whose truth we gladly recognize and accept. Its acceptance need not prevent our recognizing other complementary truths of a different order. One of these truths is: that men have perennially felt the necessity of using philosophy in formulating religious experience. Feeling is fundamental, perhaps, but if it is confined to one's self the thought comes, "Perhaps I am an exception, a bit queer." If the feeling is shared with others, a comparison results, which leads back to the rationale of the feeling—that is, to its philosophy. Or again, action is insisted upon, perchance. But action, without some fundamental purpose to which to link it, soon falters. Be it ethical or ritual, the act soon suggests a question and the question leads one to philosophy.

For the individual, therefore, generally speaking, philosophy is bound to assert itself in the inevitable attempt to make more clear

and reasonable to one's self a faith already held, and in bringing forward supplementary considerations which may set the religious nature free for further gains of faith. In other words, philosophy often accompanies the religious life of the individual, now consciously, now unconsciously; sometimes preceding the advance of religious faith, sometimes following behind to consolidate the gains made by direct frontal attack.

When we turn from the individual aspects of religion to its social side, we find philosophy still dogging our steps. There has been misconception, no doubt, in regard to the way in which religion actually spreads from man to man. That intellectual argument is a gun of smaller caliber than it is usually thought to be, is certainly true. Life, and naught else, begets life. Religious life, and naught else, begets religious life. Argue with your neighbor until the flow of words chokes you and he will still persist in his iniquity. *Live* against his error and say nothing; soon the cause for argument will have disappeared. Nevertheless, as with the individual, so in the spread of religion from man to man philoso-

phy helps. In certain cases it may precede the main charge, cutting the entanglements and clearing the way. In following up these advances it certainly has helped to preserve the gains so as to make continuity of combined action possible. That the forms thus produced have often been given an exaggerated importance, and have thus been made harmful, is no necessary argument against the value and inevitableness of their rise.

May we not conclude, then, that philosophy and religion do indeed represent autonomous phases of human life; that they differ, if not in their material and in their goal, at least in their method; but that, nevertheless, they are not independent, in that either can ignore the other entirely? Certainly philosophy cannot ignore religion, if for no other reason than that religion is a great fact of human history; and religion cannot ignore philosophy, not merely because the philosophy of past ages has pushed itself, perhaps to an unjustifiable extent, into the territory of religion, but also because the studies that deal with the human personality, be they of one sort or of another, cannot thus be cut asunder. The direct experience of the

religious believer is undeniable, but it must be tested, or checked up, by the reason. The grist of religion must be put through the mill of philosophy that man may secure a product of the very highest value, with the chaff of ignorance and of illusion winnowed away. It is, therefore, no idle question, but one of supreme moment oftentimes, to ask what the religious value of a philosophy may be.

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It is conceivable that such an inquiry as this might be conducted in a variety of ways with an equal amount of profit, though of differing kind. One might study the relation of the philosophy of Bergson to religion in general. He might proceed by first defining religion in general, setting forth its essential features as manifested in the various religions of man in all ages and climes; then, taking up in turn these essential features of religion, he might discuss the relation to them and the effect upon them of the Bergsonian ideas. In this way it might be found that certain of the philosophical ideas under examination would have a positive and favorable relation to religion, others a negative relation, and still others a

neutral influence. From these specific conclusions a general conclusion might be drawn regarding the relation to religion of the philosophy as a whole, whether favorable or unfavorable.

Another profitable method would be to select a particular religion, such as Christianity, and apply to it the process just described. First, define the essence of Christianity and then pass judgment upon the philosophy in accordance with the positive or negative relation of its ideas to the essential elements of Christianity as thus defined.

A more modest plan commends itself to me and yields values which do not have to wait for the completion of such extended investigations as are presupposed in the previous suggestions. These values, too, are not at all to be despised. Let us yield the subjects, "Religion in General" and "Essence of Christianity." Have we not already had a sufficiency of such discussions? Let us also forego any attempt to give a complete description of Bergson's philosophy. There are now literally hundreds of books and articles, in English, French, and German, not to speak of other

languages, in which satisfactory characterizations of Bergson's philosophy may be found. It would be of small use, but rather a great weariness, to repeat in such a study as this what has been so often and so excellently done elsewhere. The modern literary world would gain much by recalling the caution of the wise, even though otherwise, author of Ecclesiastes, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

It is possible, therefore, to assume a knowledge of these details or, at least, to refer to others the reader who desires them. For the same reason, and for other reasons as well, no attempt at a criticism of the philosophy need be made. That is being attended to by the philosophers, ably, loquaciously, and vociferously. Our task would be large enough in itself to excuse us from embroiling ourselves in these other matters. To turn to these things would prove too tempting; they are so complicated and so interesting. Besides, others are attending to them in a thoroughly competent way.

We would be children of wisdom should we limit ourselves to the single task of passing

in review the outstanding Bergsonian emphases for the sake of drawing any possible inferences in a religious direction, but with special reference, perhaps, to Christianity. We might thus determine what would be the religious result of a complete acceptance of the Bergsonian philosophy and thus determine whether, and how far, this philosophy is compatible with religion, and especially with the Christian religion. As LeRoy says:

The present question of the relation of Bergson to morality and religion is, not to find bases for the latter in his philosophy, but to know whether they are compatible. It is not a question of deducing morality and religion from what is already given, but whether there is room for new intuitions along these lines—intuitions of different orders of life.⁷

⁷ Edouard LeRoy, *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson* (1913).

CHAPTER II

BERGSON THE PROTESTANT

SOME of the greatest changes in human history have begun with protests. The human mind, connected with Reality by a slight thread as it often seems, swings backward and forward pendulum-like, never able to maintain itself at the plumb-line for more than a fraction of a second at a time—seconds of insight, immediately past, whose interpretation has to be figured out at the inevitable angle of the succeeding swing. We may not quarrel with the law of our being but only recognize and master it. To pursue the figure, perhaps the clock would stop without the pendulum-swing. Maintenance upon the plumb-line of thought might prove the end of all progress. Surely it would be deadly dull. Be these things as they may, we have to reckon with the fact of action and reaction, extreme and revulsion from the extreme. And if this shuttle-like movement of thought is a necessary law of human development, then protests and

protesters are fundamentally grounded in the very philosophy of history itself.¹

I do not forget that we are at present bored, and rightly so, by the omnipresent "muck-raker." The "muck-raker," as distinguished from the genuine reformer, is a sham Protestant; a child of littleness who is either an insincere imitator, for reasons best known to himself and best not known by others, or one whose humanitarianism is so expansive and so unballasted that it cannot be confined within reasonable limits; one whose sense of disproportion varies directly as the square of his charitable feeling or, in other cases, of his overweening self-interest. The "muck-raker" is the modern public form of a private nuisance which God gave man from the beginning, for his chastening—the acquaintance who always and inevitably objects, criticises, and protests.

Still, I shall reaffirm the remark that the

¹ The pendulum figure is suggestive and the best that occurs to me for the immediate purpose. Were progress and not protest my present theme, I should prefer to use the illustration of the ascending spiral as truest, though not perfectly true, to the facts of life. That is, round and round we go; and that means backward and forward, but never directly backward nor directly forward; ever onward and, at least eventually, upward.

beginnings of great things in human history have usually been attended by protests. The earlier Greek thinkers protested against the crudely anthropomorphic Olympians and thus laid the basis for the later developments of Greek philosophy. The Hebrew Prophets criticised the customary religion of their day and by their criticism "made straight," or at least more straight, "a highway for our God." Paul disengaged the innate freedom and life of the Christian religion by lodging an effective protest against the Judaizing of Christianity through rabbinical legalism. Luther, a devoted disciple of Paul, repeated the work of his master, under different conditions but with a similar result. And the Great Master of Paul and of Luther, Himself brought into being the most powerful spiritual explosive the world has known and thus became the Leader and Progenitor of true Protestants. All progress is necessarily accompanied by protest, even though all protest is not on the way of progress.

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One of the things that first fix the attention of a reader of Bergson, it matters not

which of his books he may be reading,² is the frequent note of polemic. He, too, is a Protester. Should we call him a true Protestant? Perhaps time alone will tell. But, surely, the range of his knowledge and the beauty of his style predispose us in his favor. Whatever he may or may not be, he is not a small man. Neither his intellect nor his soul, to employ a Bergsonian distinction, is of small caliber. There must be some greatness in a man whom some seriously consider to be another Kant. Thus it is impossible to dismiss him with cheap and flippant characterization and equally impossible to silence him with scorn and epithet. He is genuine; and those who do not relish his protests must be as genuine, as big, and as clever as he or their chance of successful refutation is gone. Even were he refuted, at least a part of his protest would carry through for

² One should begin, I think, with his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, where he himself draws up his program in definite fashion. Over against *Creative Evolution*, this book presents the bareness, but also the sharp definition, of a landscape gardener's plan as compared with the garden itself, whose paths are beautified and set off, but also somewhat obscured, by the luxuriance of plant, shrub, and tree. The remaining works of importance are, *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*. To these may be added his short and charming essay on *Laughter*.

Bergson is the harbinger, or better, an early manifestation of a new spiritual season whose warmth none of us shall be able or willing to resist. One may prefer this manifestation, another that, but all must live the season through.

Bergson has crossed swords primarily with absolutistic rationalism, whose vice is a narrow, unvitalized logic; with scientific determinism, which has often deserted its proper scientific attitude for one of intellectual dogmatism often bordering on that of absolutism; and finally, with materialism, which too often lurks near both of the preceding points of view.

Coming into prominence contemporaneously with pragmatism and receiving, also, highest praise from William James himself, it is but natural that this philosophy, being what it is, should often be confused with pragmatism. Bergson protests, as the pragmatists protest, against a rigidly rationalistic absolutism and against an equally rigid scientific determinism. It should be borne in mind, however, that these likenesses are more than offset by differences. Bergson is essentially anything but pragmatic. To be sure, his world, like that of

James, is a wide-open world, not fixed and static, but his interest is in "what is" rather than in "what works." I should say that the chief difference between Bergson and other thinkers of an idealistic type is not one of pragmatism *versus* idealism, but of biological *versus* a purely logical idealism. In classing Bergson with the pragmatists, men have used the mistaken formula that two men who fight the same thing are necessarily in agreement with each other. Protestantism has ever been pursued by the genius, good or evil, of sectarianism. James, the Protestant, and Bergson, the Protestant, are not to be identified.

Confusion also exists regarding Bergson's estimate of the intellect. In spite of his demotion of the intellect, as some would call it, Bergson is not so anti-intellectual as he has often been made out. His polemic against the immortal intellectualists has, indeed, fairly laid him open to such a charge, but a careful analysis of his position reveals a recognition of the intellect, not merely as a necessary instrument of action—though it is chiefly that, according to Bergson—but also as a

means of acquiring at least a partial knowledge of the Absolute. Evidently Bergson's polemical emphasis has misled some of the critics. He does not impeach the intellect. He impeaches those who, he thinks, have misused the intellect. Even did he entirely debar the intellect from practising its art in the realm of ultimate reality, he might present a show of reason by exhibiting the discordant results hitherto obtained by this means, and the increasing wreckage of agnosticism. But he does not so completely debar the intellect. He merely wishes, as we shall see, to legitimize another power along with that of the intellect, the power of intuition which, he thinks, has been unfairly and harmfully repressed. From the coöperation of the two will come mutual enrichment.*

Again, Bergson has been branded as anti-scientific. I think this characterization is very misleading. Those who proclaim it are misled

* Doubtless the logic Bergson attacks is, to the modern logician himself, a "man of straw." But it is not so in general. The less rigid, more inclusive logic of recent years is still merely "food for the gods." The modern logician can be of help to Bergson, but not by misinterpreting his attack upon the Aristotelian logic. That logic may be outworn for them, but its general sway is still undoubted.

by the pronounced polemic of the man against certain tendencies among scientists; a polemic which is far from being anti-scientific, in the proper sense of that term. Bergson holds, as René Gillouin says, that "determinism is an excellent method within certain limits, but that it has been pushed beyond those limits and made ruinous by being set up as a fundamental doctrine." This is not an anti-scientific position. It is merely a sane recognition of the limits of science and of the scientific method. It is aimed only against those who wish to exalt their scientific method to a metaphysical throne and burden us with the tyranny of a New Dogmatism.

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We now begin to see what the main lines of the Bergsonian protest are and whither they lead. Let us first discuss his protest against what he considers to be an abuse of the principle of scientific determinism. The scientist has been crowding us rather hard. He knows that we honor him and that we cannot get along without him. He has not only enriched our imagination by revealing to us the immensely great, as well as the infinitely small,

wonders of nature, but he has also given us increased length of days through the elimination of disease and, to some of us (others of us, I should say), through the capture of nature's intimate secrets, increased riches with which to enjoy these multiplied days. That men who have done such things should not be conscious of their power, would indicate an anomalous lack of mental acumen.

I think that this self-consciousness has tended to spoil the scientist. At any rate, we have been told often enough that it was a question of all or none. Either give up your scientific method altogether, or pursue it everywhere. To be sure, its natural home is in the physical sciences but now it has come up into psychology, by way of biology and physiology, and even religion and ethics are about to be subdued. Not that the scientific method should not be applied in every direction. It certainly should be. But its own fundamental principle should lead it to recognize that differences in the nature of the material must differentiate the scientific handling of living organisms from the scientific handling of purely material masses.

I suppose it has been the fear that deterministic materialism would dominate, if not eliminate, ethics and religion that has caused the continued distrust of conservatives, or their active opposition, towards anything which looked like evolution. We too easily dismiss the craving of religious people for miracle, for "signs and wonders," when we condemn it as merely the product of ignorance and credulity. Particular judgments and beliefs may often be explained in this way, but back of the craving itself there often lies a deeper reason, usually not clearly realized, but a reason that concerns the very springs of religion. For the truly religious man there is always a dualism, more or less clearly defined, between the personal and the impersonal in life. One constant element of religious experience is a sense of the triumph of the personal over the impersonal. Here lie eternal issues; and any tendency towards the reduction of the world-life to the level of impersonality will always be resisted, and rightly even though unintelligently resisted, by all sincere religious men.

But indeed it is not merely ultra-conservatives who scent present danger. Even Mc-

Dougall has pointed out ⁴ that, due to the all-embracing extension of scientific determinism, our psychology has become very largely a "psychology without a soul." For religion this spells danger, if not disaster, because, he continues, religion is inevitably bound up with some form of "animism" (as he calls it), that is, with a belief in the distinct existence of the soul of the individual.

Now Bergson does not start out from any religious presupposition; but solely on the basis of facts, chiefly biological facts, he comes to the conclusion that science is pushing its necessarily deterministic method too far. It is stepping out of the circle, thus disqualifying the throw. The interesting thing, however, about Bergson's attack upon science is, that it is itself united with an extensive use of the scientific method and of scientific material. It might better be called a challenge, or a sharp reminder, than an attack. Let us see what Bergson himself says:

Men of science have fixed their attention mainly on the concepts with which they have marked out the pathway of intuition. The more they laid stress

⁴ William McDougall, *Mind and Body*. Cf. Preface, p. xiii.

on these residual products, which have turned into symbols, the more they attributed a symbolic character to every kind of science. And the more they believed in the symbolic character of science, the more did they indeed make science symbolical. Gradually they have blotted out all difference, in positive science, between the natural and the artificial, between the data of immediate intuition, and the enormous work of analysis which the understanding pursues round intuition. Thus they have prepared the way for a doctrine which affirms the relativity of all our knowledge.⁵

And again,⁶

Now I recognize that positive science can and should proceed as if organization was like making a machine. Only so will it have any hold on organized bodies. For its object is not to show us the essence of things, but to furnish us with the best means of acting on them. Physics and chemistry are well advanced sciences, and living matter lends itself to our action only so far as we can treat it by the processes of our physics and chemistry. Organization can therefore only be studied scientifically if the organized body has first been likened to a machine. The cells will be the pieces of the machine, the organism

⁵ Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, English translation by T. E. Holme, pp. 77-78.

⁶ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. English translation by Mitchell. The following quotations are to be found on pp. 93, 195, 207 and 254, respectively.

their assemblage, and the elementary labors which have organized the parts will be regarded as the real elements of the labor which has organized the whole. This is the standpoint of science. Quite different, in our opinion, is that of philosophy. . . .

Positive science is, in fact, a work of pure intellect. Now, whether our conception of the intellect be accepted or rejected, there is one point on which everybody will agree with us, and that is that the intellect is at home in the presence of unorganized matter. This matter it makes use of more and more by mechanical inventions, and mechanical inventions become the easier to it the more it thinks matter as mechanism. . . .

In principle, positive science bears on reality itself, provided it does not overstep the limits of its own domain, which is inert matter. . . .

Now, it might easily be shown that the conclusions of this metaphysic, springing from science, have rebounded upon science itself, as it were, by ricochet. They penetrate the whole of our so-called empiricism. Physics and chemistry study only inert matter; biology, when it treats the living being physically and chemically, considers only the inert side of the living; hence the mechanistic explanations, in spite of their development, include only a small part of the real. To suppose *a priori* that the whole of the real is resolvable into elements of this kind, or at least that mechanism can give a complete translation of what happens in the world, is to pronounce

for a certain metaphysic—the very metaphysic of which Spinoza and Leibnitz have laid down the principles and drawn the consequences.

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Now the upshot of such a protest is, in itself, heartening to religionists. Before all, we are put in the way of seeing that, in a certain sense, religion is out of the range of science. This figure is rather more apt than figures usually are in that, though religion is out of the range of the scientific batteries, needing no longer to fear destruction by them, she must, nevertheless, dispose her forces in accordance with the territory covered by science. The main thing, however, is to realize that scientific dogmatism is in discredit; that science did not destroy philosophical and theological dogmatism in order to set up a new dogmatism of her own; that the facts, inductively studied, lead to an “open-door policy” by which religion enters into its rightful own without the unfair and illegitimate intrusion upon her of other claims and interests. This does not bring us up into the free air of finality. Not at all. But it certainly does bring to religion a great opportunity—the opportunity to demonstrate

unimpeded her power and validity. The case shall not be prejudged against her. It would be going beyond the facts to say that Bergson alone is responsible for this changing attitude. He is but one among those, though a leader among them, who have been restraining scientific smartness and preparing the way for more vivid, non-scientific but not anti-scientific, appreciations.

But Bergson, at least, has done more than this—more than reading science a needed lesson. The inductive method of science has superinduced the inductive temper. The result has been a great increase of fundamental agnosticism. Now, one finds it hard to be severe with even an out-and-out agnostic. His extreme modesty disarms one's attack and makes almost any statement about spiritual realities appear too self-assertive, if not actually dogmatic. And yet one has the suspicion that, even with the agnostic, a bit of dogmatism has crept in unawares; that the Absolute which went out of the door, clothed in the garments of knowledge, has come in again at the window, garbed in the weeds of ignorance.

One thing, however, the agnostic himself will

tell you. The agnostic diet is not as filling as porridge. Indeed it is distinctly unsatisfying and leaves a longing in the heart, if not a gnawing there. Agnosticism may be the final thing. I doubt it. But if it is, I pity humanity as it grows in unsatisfied and unsatisfiable spiritual hunger. Let priests unfrock themselves and the pious raise no more pinnaled spires to the glory of God; it is all "vanity of vanities," as the Preacher said. If agnosticism is the last word, then a good case could be made out for the Illusion Theory. Better be deceived by a pretty and satisfying fancy than to face with dull eye a certain uncertainty. At least, if one were thoroughgoing, one could never be sure that it was an illusion anyway, and it might therefore be true, according to the most consistent agnostic. But he wouldn't—couldn't—say so.

Let us come out of the cave into the sunlight. The air is rather heavy in there and breathing is difficult. Who calls us out? There are several voices, but one is Bergson's. We may appreciate the sunlight all the more for having been in the cave, but we are grateful, nevertheless, for the release. To leave the

figure: the modern educated world has been "sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought"—with agnosticism. All our knowledge is relative; there is no hope of our ever being able to "jump out of our skins" and attain to any final knowledge; absolute knowledge, the truly real, is forever shut off from us.

These things Bergson disputes with vigor, reasserting the old belief of man that he *can* know truth, *the* truth, the *final* truth. And with the reassertion of this belief comes back the collateral conviction, "the truth shall make you free." May not the twentieth century see the advent of a "Day View" of existence—a view of faith, appreciation and enjoyment—after the "Night View" of an all-embracing determinism, a self-distrustful agnosticism and a despairing skepticism? This need not be the pantheistic "Day View" of Fechner, though even that has its qualities compared with the "Night View."

There is pregnancy in Jacks' thought¹ that the world should be taken as a work of art rather than as a problem to be solved. That is, we must open the eyes of our appreciative

¹ L. P. Jacks, *The Alchemy of Thought*. Cf. Chapter 2.

self as well as those of our logical self. This may seem a very ironical suggestion to those who are caught in the web of practical life and are struggling for their very existence. But the Christian message, likewise, often impresses such hearers ironically. That may be so much the worse for the Christian message, but I am inclined to think that it is just so much the better for Jacks. At any rate, Bergson is here on the side of Christianity and on the side of Jacks, Fechner or anyone else who thinks, for any reason whatsoever, that life is still worth living. "True religion and unde-filed" is fundamentally optimistic. It frowns upon pessimism and pessimism frowns upon it. Pessimism is the Deadly Nightshade in the garden of man. Whoso destroys it serves man and religion. This Bergson does by cutting off one of its roots, namely, radical agnosticism. He holds it to be untrue that we can "believe only what we can claw," or rather, he holds that we can claw further into Reality than many think—in fact, into the Absolute itself. That makes life worth while and gives religion a new chance.

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But while with one hand Bergson slays the Agnostic Leviathan, with the other he reaches out over the territory of the orthodox—whether philosophical or theological—and lays about the head of the Absolutistic Giant of dogmatic orthodoxy. To understand fully the nature and amount of Bergson's emphasis upon evolution, creative evolution, and upon his new idea of time and teleology, one must appreciate that, in every case, Bergson is largely engaged in a vigorous polemic against prevailing modes of thought. It is not to our purpose to discuss these matters here, except by way of brief illustration of the present point—Bergson's protest against mere logical absolutism.

The novelty of his approach to the question is seen in that he also opposes the Spencerian scheme of evolution which ends in the doctrine of the "Unknowable." This system, he says, is equally rigid, formal, and barren with the systems of the absolutists. It only gets out of its evolution what was already put in at the beginning and therefore, like orthodox absolutism, does not fit into, or explain, the facts of a life that is ever growing. On the con-

trary, evolution rightfully viewed is a real process actually giving rise to new things all the time, things unpredictable and unforeseeable and therefore not pre-ordained, at least in detail. Bergson sees in such a world a place for a certain kind of teleology, final purpose—Providence, if you will—but it cannot be the fixed and rigid finality of the absolutistic dogmatist, be he rationalistic or orthodox, or both.

Bergson says: ⁸

If philosophy leave biological and psychological facts to positive science alone, as it has left, and rightly left, physical facts . . . [then] . . . it will accept *a priori* a mechanistic conception of all nature, a conception unreflected and even unconscious, the outcome of a material need . . .

The moment it does so, its fate is sealed. The philosopher has no longer any choice save between a metaphysical dogmatism and a metaphysical skepticism, both of which rest, at bottom, on the same postulate, and neither of which adds anything to positive science. He may hypostasize the unity of nature, or, what comes to the same thing, the unity of science, in a being who is nothing since he does nothing, an ineffectual God who simply sums up in

⁸ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. English translation by Mitchell. The following quotations are to be found on pp. 196, 197, 40, 94-95, 248-249.

himself all the given; or in an eternal Matter from whose womb have been poured out the properties of things and the laws of nature; or, again, in a pure Form which endeavors to seize the unseizable multiplicity, and which is, as we will, the form of nature or the form of thought. . . . In many cases, however, we feel the frame cracking. . . . To a metaphysical dogmatism, which has erected into an absolute the factitious unity of science, there succeeds a skepticism or a relativism that universalizes and extends to all the results of science the artificial character of some of them. . . .

Yet finalism is not, like mechanism, a doctrine with fixed rigid outlines. It admits of as many inflections as we like. The mechanistic philosophy is to be taken or left: it must be left if the least grain of dust, by straying from the path foreseen by mechanics, should show the slightest trace of spontaneity. The doctrine of final causes, on the contrary, will never be definitely refuted. If one form of it be put aside, it will take another. Its principle, which is essentially psychological, is very flexible. It is so extensible, and thereby so comprehensive, that one accepts something of it as soon as one rejects pure mechanism. The theory we shall put forward in this book will therefore necessarily partake of finalism to a certain extent. . . .

With greater precision, we may compare the process by which nature constructs an eye to the simple act by which we raise the hand. But we

supposed at first that the hand met with no resistance. Let us now imagine that, instead of moving in air, the hand has to pass through iron filings which are compressed and offer resistance to it in proportion as it goes forward. At a certain moment the hand will have exhausted its effort, and, at this very moment, the filings will be massed and coördinated in a certain definite form, to wit, that of the hand that is stopped and of a part of the arm. Now, suppose that the hand and arm are invisible. Lookers-on will seek the reason of the arrangement in the filings themselves and in forces within the mass. Some will account for the position of each filing by the action exerted upon it by the neighboring filings: these are the mechanists. Others will prefer to think that a plan of the whole has presided over the detail of these elementary actions: they are the finalists. But the truth is that there has been merely one indivisible act, that of the hand passing through the filings: the inexhaustible detail of the movement of the grains, as well as the order of their final arrangement, expresses negatively, in a way, this undivided movement, being the unitary form of resistance, and not a synthesis of positive elementary actions. For this reason, if the arrangement of the grains is termed an "effect" and the movement of the hand a "cause," it may indeed be said that the whole of the effect is explained by the whole of the cause, but to parts of the cause parts of the effect will in no wise correspond. In other

words, neither mechanism nor finalism will here be in place, and we must resort to an explanation of a different kind. . . .

God thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom. Creation, so conceived, is not a mystery; we experience it ourselves when we act freely . . . that action increases as it goes on, that it creates in the measure of its advance, is what each of us finds when he watches himself act.

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One sees at once that this phase of Bergson's position has a very direct bearing upon religious ideas and formulations. God is Himself growing, and while a Bergsonian may be able to connect with Him a certain consistency of character and a general direction of purpose, he cannot any longer abide by a purely logical interpretation of God's infinity, omniscience, omnipotence, and the like, since such an interpretation is inconsistent with, and meant to be inconsistent with, real growth, evolution, or progress. Through this new view Bergson claims to have resolved the old antinomies of human thought, such as free will and predestination, by showing that the problems are pseudo-problems. "The problem of

freedom has thus sprung from a misunderstanding: it has been to the moderns what the paradoxes of the Eleatics were to the ancients, and, like these paradoxes, it has its origin in the illusion through which we confuse succession and simultaneity, duration and extensity, quality and quantity.”⁹ Whether Bergson is right in this or not, it is refreshing to turn away from the lifeless discussions of so much of our orthodox philosophy and theology towards a philosophy that seems, at least, to live and move and have some being, even if its “being” be “becoming.”

Perhaps we do not need any more of this sort of protest in religion just now. We have indeed had much of it and very likely we should turn to other ways of thinking. If this protest of Bergson were merely a protest without a positive basis and a correspondingly constructive proposal, I should be disposed to say that we had had enough. But his is not a blind, unreasoned, and purely negative protest. It is an unusually acute one, and it is accompanied by what purports to be a sub-

⁹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. English translation by Pogson, p. 240.

stitute view. This substitute view is only partially worked out, but more is to come, if Bergson lives; and he has already given us some of its main features. What has been given promises well for a complete view which will have a positive and helpful influence upon religion, by way of greater vitality, inwardness, and progressiveness.

Religion has had to struggle perennially against that form of infidelity which refuses to believe that God can take care of Himself; which insists on the maintenance of a "Board of Guardians," usually selected, of course, from the inside circle; which insists that the truth of God and of His universe must be protected by certain sacred custodians, either in the form of a direct personal supervision or in the form of codes, firmans, decrees, and creeds, made sacrosanct and infallible forever. Those who feel, as I do, that the greatest witness to the truth and power of religion has been its ability to survive the efforts of friends like these, will speedily and gratefully recognize the possibility, at least, of great religious value in a philosophy like that of Bergson, which eliminates this kind of thing from life as a

whole. As has already been seen, Bergson's conception of the Vital Impetus necessarily affects a Bergsonian conception of God. The Divine Being, so conceived, would not be blind, purposeless, and ineffective, as some say. There is room for purpose, end, and consistency of character, but there would also be a delicious unexpectedness which would delight the vitally minded and dismay, as it ought to dismay, the smugly formal. Such a God would be hard for an absolutist or a dogmatist to believe in. He would require too much faith from them and too little assistance. For that very reason He might prove the joy of more truly religious souls.

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The originality and utter impartiality of M. Bergson, the Protestant, is well illustrated by the fact that he turns fiercely also upon some of those who gleefully agree with him in the protest we have just been discussing. Materialism is a word which is used in very different senses and it may, consequently, be referred to very different causes. But practical materialism and theoretic materialism are not so far apart as they sometimes seem. They

interact upon each other as cause and effect, and both of them are, in the long run, fatal to religion. Bergson's whole position is anti-materialistic throughout, but, at one point in particular, we find him crossing swords with the materialist and fighting to the finish. It is where he discusses the relation of mind and matter. His whole system depends upon a successful refutation of parallelism and epiphenomenalism, and we find him devoting much attention to those who deny the existence of spiritual activity underived from, or independent of, physical changes.¹⁰

But our distinction between "pure perception" and "pure memory" has yet another aim. Just as pure perception, by giving us hints as to the nature of matter, allows us to take an intermediate position between realism and idealism, so pure memory, on the other hand, by opening to us a view of what is called spirit, should enable us to decide between those other two doctrines, materialism and spiritualism.¹¹ . . .

. . . For it is possible to sum up our conclusions as to pure perception by saying that *there is in*

¹⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, Chapter 3.

¹¹ The translator here appends this note, "The word 'spiritualism' is used throughout this work to signify any philosophy that claims for spirit an existence of its own."

matter something more than, but not something different from, that which is actually given. Undoubtedly conscious perception does not compass the whole of matter, since it consists, in as far as it is conscious, in the separation, or the "discernment," of that which, in matter, interests our various needs. But between this perception of matter and matter itself there is but a difference of degree and not of kind, pure perception standing towards matter in the relation of the part to the whole. This amounts to saying that matter cannot exercise powers of any kind other than those which we perceive. It has no mysterious virtue, it can conceal none. To take a definite example, one moreover which interests us most nearly, we may say that the nervous system, a material mass presenting certain qualities of color, resistance, cohesion, etc., may well possess unperceived physical properties, but physical properties only. And hence it can have no other office than to receive, inhibit, or transmit movement.

Now the essence of every form of materialism is to maintain the contrary, since it holds that consciousness, with all its functions, is born of the mere interplay of material elements. Hence it is led to consider even the perceived qualities of matter,—sensible, and consequently felt, qualities,—as so many phosphorescences which follow the track of the cerebral phenomena in the act of perception. Matter, thus supposed capable of creating elemen-

tary facts of consciousness, might therefore just as well engender intellectual facts of the highest order. It is, then, of the essence of materialism to assert the perfect relativity of sensible qualities, and it is not without good reason that this thesis, which Democritus has formulated in precise terms, is as old as materialism.

But spiritualism has always followed materialism along this path. As if everything lost to matter *must* be gained by spirit, spiritualism has never hesitated to despoil matter of the qualities with which it is invested in our perception, and which, on this view, are subjective appearances. Matter has thus too often been reduced to a mysterious entity which, just because all we know of it is an empty show, might as well engender thought as any other phenomenon.

The truth is that there is one, and only one, method of refuting materialism: it is to show that matter is precisely that which it appears to be. Thereby we eliminate all virtuality, all hidden power, from matter, and establish the phenomena of spirit as an independent reality. But to do this we must leave to matter those qualities which materialists and spiritualists alike strip from it: the latter that they may make of them representations of the spirit, the former that they may regard them only as the accidental garb of space.¹²

¹² Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. English translation by Paul and Palmer, pp. 77-80.

Regardless of the validity of Bergson's constructive position, it is encouraging to witness his doughty attack upon those psychologists, now very numerous, who have practically outlawed the soul from polite psychological society. His summons at least serves as a writ of *habeas corpus* by which the soul will be given a fair chance to prove itself innocent of the charge of wrongful impersonation. The soul is the citadel of religion. If we lose this fortress, the campaign is over and unconditional surrender alone remains. Bergson protests against the necessity of capitulation. By counter-attacks he opens the way for reinforcements and re-victualling. No wonder the reduced but faithful garrison is heartened.

He indicates his general position and even hints at his method when he says that the only way to refute materialism "is to show that matter is exactly that which it appears to be." At another time and in another connection it would be necessary to follow this lead further. It is enough for us here that we remind ourselves of Bergson's fundamental insistence upon the reality of the soul, upon the fact of

at least a partial freedom, and upon the essentially psychic, or spiritual, nature of the whole process of evolution. At several points in the elaboration of his system, notably in his discussion of the reality of the soul and of the fact of freedom, he comes into direct conflict with materialistic theories. It is therefore quite fair to include materialism with scientific determinism, agnosticism, and dogmatic absolutism, in presenting a picture of Bergson the Protestant.

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There is religious value, as we have seen, in all these protests, looked at merely as protests. They are, as a matter of fact, only incidental as protests. Their main service is to level the ground for the positive Bergsonian structure. One is therefore led to expect from this philosophy a general compatibility with the religious viewpoint. It is certain that a religious position, closely conformed to the Bergsonian philosophy, would yield at least some of the age-old religious satisfactions. Freshness and piquancy would not be lacking. They are lacking in current orthodoxy. Per-

haps Bergson may point us out a way—not necessarily *the* way or the *only* way, but *a* way—by which our religious thought may become revitalized.

CHAPTER III

HOW DO WE KNOW REALITY?

I WELL remember a discussion with my sister, when we were both in early youth, regarding the greenness of the grass. She propounded to me the baffling question, "You call the grass green and I call the grass green, but how do we know that your green is the same as my green."

I fancy that it is unusual to have this philosophical question posed in such a clear-cut form at such an early age, but the thoughtful do not need many years of experience in order to become aware of the problem of reality and truth, not only as between man and man but also as between man and all else. The child, living in the protected atmosphere of the family, sees life through one set of windows largely. Later in life other windows open before him and, as he gazes through, he sees vistas hard to piece together into a homogeneous landscape. So, in the history of the great hu-

man family, questions regarding the nature and the possibility of knowledge have been "raised by the divergent views to which meditation on physical and metaphysical questions leads. This division raises the question: Is it at all possible for the human understanding to solve these problems?"¹

From the age of the Greek sophists the question has continually recurred, "How do we know the True and the Real?" As Locke says in his *Epistle to the Reader*,² "It came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course, and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature (metaphysical inquiries), it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with." Since Locke's time men have become increasingly sensitive regarding the final validity of their mental activity. The two extreme notes of the octave are still struck no doubt, but there is equally little doubt that today the fingers insensibly

¹ Paulsen, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 2nd edition, p. 349. Quoted by Pringle-Patterson in his article, "Epistemology," in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, edited by J. Mark Baldwin.

² Quoted by Pringle-Patterson in the foregoing article, "Epistemology."

glide towards and tend to rest upon the middle lower tones of agnosticism, bringing forth a series of pronouncedly minor chords.

Be this as it may, the problem of the validity of our knowledge has more and more absorbed attention, and rightly so. It is a fundamental problem. We must know whether we are living in a world of reality or in one of make-believe. Take away the hope and confidence which the touch of Finality imparts and what is left for man but materialism, utilitarianism, stoicism, or at best a "practical" humanitarianism whose very practicality is nullified by its blindness?

It would seem as if *final* realities were more and more being consigned to the limbo of discarded human illusions. We are bid to the cult of "the Practical." "Practical," if it means anything, means, "capable of achieving a useful end." But of what value, pray, is the adjective "useful" in defining the word "practical," if there is no such thing as "end"? Thus this supposedly theoretical question becomes a very practical one. In fact, one cannot be fundamentally practical without answering it. We are especially in-

terested in the effect of this answer upon religion, for its effect is immediate and direct. But its effect is also as directly felt in the sphere of ethics and of everyday morality. Thus the answer to our "unpractical" question has to do with those secret springs of life whence flow happiness and destiny.

The untrained man is unaware of such difficulties as these and unhesitatingly trusts his senses. He may cry out at times, "I can hardly believe my eyes," but he does believe them, year in and year out. You remark that he *assumes* their trustworthiness. Perhaps the philosopher will have to do the same. Indeed one of them says just this. "It is obvious that we cannot sit in judgment upon the cognitive faculties without employing those very faculties, and thereby implying their trustworthiness. The validity of knowledge as such is an ultimate and inevitable assumption. . . ." ³

"Well," retorts the plain man, "if this be so, what is the use of all this philosophical pother over a question which is not a question but an assumption?" "Much use every way,"

³ Pringle-Patterson, *op. cit.*

replies the philosopher. Besides possessing other values, "its use is, in the first instance, polemical, in answer to the challenge of skepticism, subjectivism, agnosticism, relativism. In this regard, it is the province of epistemology to investigate the nature of the cognitive relation as such, in order to discover its essential conditions, and so to determine whether the circumstances of human knowledge are such as to invalidate its claim to be a true account of reality. An agnostic relativism condemns knowledge because it does not satisfy certain conditions. By exposing the inherently contradictory nature of the demands made, epistemological analysis deprives such criticism of its basis, and restores us to the original confidence of reason in itself. Till skepticism and agnosticism cease from the land, this polemic will necessarily continue to be prominent in epistemological literature, whichever side may win the greater body of adherents." ⁴

We see, therefore, that it makes a great deal of difference to the average man, in the everydayness of life, what his theory of knowledge

⁴ Pringle-Patterson, *op. cit.*

is; what sort of knowledge-theory is prevalent about him; what theory is nearest the actual fact. Likewise, in discussing the religious aspect of a philosophy, it is essential to know that philosophy's answer to the question of the validity of knowledge; the theory of knowledge which it presents.

In discussing this interesting and basal element of Bergson's thought, we must impose strict limits upon the presentation and examination of details.⁵ Bergson's theory contains difficulties whose resolution would require an extended consideration. I refer to such problems as the nature and function of "pure perception," and the exact status of the intellect in relation to final truth. But the main trend of the theory is clear enough and our task is merely to indicate that trend and then draw inferences in the direction of religion.

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⁵ There are numerous books and articles in which these matters are fully presented. Compare, for example: H. Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*; H. W. Carr, "Bergson's Theory of Knowledge," *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society* (London, 1909. New Series, Vol. IX, pp. 41-60); A. D. Lindsay, *The Philosophy of Bergson* (London, 1911); Muirhead, in the *Hibbert Journal* (July, 1911, IX: 895-907); Edouard LeRoy, *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson* (New York, 1913).

The three main theories of knowledge which had been advanced prior to that of Bergson were: that the mind is a *tabula rasa* on which things impress themselves through sensation; that the mind transfers its own forms to the outer world; that mind and matter go their own separate ways, but conform to each other according to a pre-established harmony. The tendency of the first theory is towards materialism. The second theory, in spite of the valuable service it has rendered, has been one of the main sources of modern agnosticism. The third theory begs the whole question and answers nothing.

Now Bergson holds that our theory of knowledge must go hand in hand with our theory of life; thus the origin of our intellectual concepts may be traced and their true value determined.

This amounts to saying that *theory of knowledge* and *theory of life* seem to us inseparable. A theory of life that is not accompanied by a criticism of knowledge is obliged to accept, as they stand, the concepts which the understanding puts at its disposal: it can but enclose the facts, willing or not, in pre-existing frames which it regards as ultimate. It thus obtains

a symbolism which is convenient, perhaps even necessary to positive science, but not a direct vision of its object. On the other hand, a theory of knowledge which does not replace the intellect in the general evolution of life will teach us neither how the frames of knowledge have been constructed nor how we can enlarge or go beyond them. It is necessary that these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of life, should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly.⁶

What has just been said makes it clear that we must include Bergson's theory of life in our present discussion. Let us, therefore, survey this theory briefly: All things may be traced back to an original, self-sufficient "Vital Impetus,"⁷ whose inner nature is movement, growth, change, "duration"; whose one goal is ever to create more life. Thus the "will to live" is dominant in the organic world which this Vital Impetus has evolved. Spreading like a sheaf, the "élan" achieved different results in different directions. Matter represents the failure of the Vital Impetus to fulfill its destiny and may be described as a kind of

⁶ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. English translation by Mitchell. Introduction, p. xiii.

⁷ This is the translation of "*élan vital*" which Bergson himself prefers.

condensed "élan," its lifeless residuum. On the other hand, highest success has been attained in the development of the instinct, best seen in the hymenoptera, and in the development of the intellect, best seen in man.

So we come back . . . to the idea we started from, that of an *original impetus* of life, passing from one generation of germs to the following generation of germs through the developed organisms which bridge the interval between the generations. This impetus, sustained right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, is the fundamental cause of variations, at least of those that are regularly passed on, that accumulate and create new species. In general, when species have begun to diverge from a common stock, they accentuate their divergence as they progress in their evolution. Yet, in certain definite points, they may evolve identically; in fact, they must do so if the hypothesis of a common impetus be accepted. This is just what we shall have to show now in a more precise way. . . .⁸

The evolution movement would be a simple one, and we should soon have been able to determine its direction, if life had described a single course, like that of a solid ball shot from a cannon. But it proceeds rather like a shell, which suddenly bursts into

⁸ This quotation and those immediately following it are taken from Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, pp. 87-88, 98, 135.

fragments, which fragments, being themselves shells, burst in their turn into fragments destined to burst again, and so on for a time incommensurably long. We perceive only what is nearest to us, namely, the scattered movements of the pulverized explosions. From them we have to go back, stage by stage, to the original movement.

When a shell bursts, the particular way it breaks is explained both by the explosive force of the powder it contains and by the resistance of the metal. So of the way life breaks into individuals and species. It depends, we think, on the two series of causes: the resistance life meets from inert matter, and the explosive force—due to an unstable balance of tendencies—which life bears within itself.

. . . But the real and profound causes of division (in the case of unorganized matter) were those which life bore within its bosom. For life is tendency, and the essence of a tendency is to develop in the form of a sheaf, creating, by its very growth, divergent directions among which its impetus is divided. This we observe in ourselves, in the evolution of that special tendency which we call our character. Each of us, glancing back over his history, will find that his child-personality, though indivisible, united in itself divers persons, which could remain blended just because they were in a nascent state: their indecision, so charged with promise, is one of the greatest charms of childhood. But these interwoven personalities become incompatible in course of growth,

and, as each of us can live but one life, a choice must perforce be made. We choose in reality without ceasing; without ceasing, also, we abandon many things. The route we pursue in time is strewn with the remains of all that we began to be, of all that we might have become. But nature, which has at command an incalculable number of lives, is in no wise bound to make such sacrifices. She preserves the different tendencies that have bifurcated with their growth. She creates with them diverging series of species that will evolve separately.

. . . Vegetative torpor, instinct, and intelligence—these, then, are the elements that coincided in the vital impulsion common to plants and animals, and which, in the course of a development in which they were made manifest in the most unforeseen forms, have been dissociated by the very fact of their growth. *The cardinal error which, from Aristotle onwards, has vitiated most of the philosophies of nature, is to see in vegetative, instinctive, and rational life, three successive degrees of the development of one and the same tendency, whereas they are three divergent directions of an activity which has split up as it grew.* The difference between them is not a difference of intensity, nor, more generally, of degree, but of kind.

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So much for Bergson's theory of life. Recalling his statement that "it is necessary that

these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of life, should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly," let us now turn to his theory of knowledge which, as he maintains, is and must be in continuous interaction with his theory of life.

Bergson maintains that instinct and intellect are both practical in their function; they are aimed at securing more life. But they differ in that "intellect deals with relationships—instinct with things."⁹ Also, instinct uses organized means to accomplish its end and intellect uses the unorganized. That is, intellect can fabricate tools while instinct has to depend upon the "tools" furnished by nature. Thus intellect's conquests of nature have been greater than those of instinct, but instinct is closer to reality. The latter alone has direct contact with reality, but, being unintellectual, it will not seek Reality as a Whole. It goes blindly at a very small part. Intellect, on the contrary, has become disinterested enough to seek Reality as a Whole, that is, to speculate, but it is cut off by its very nature from that

⁹ Cf. Albert Steenbergen, *Henri Bergson's Intuitive Philosophy*. Jena, 1909.

direct contact with reality which alone can provide the proper means, basis, and material for speculation. "Without our intellect we would not speculate. The intellect is the source of the *need* for speculation, but not its instrument." ¹⁰

Man retains in intuition the latent power of direct contact with reality which instinct possesses so intensely in its limited field. But our intuition has been oppressed by the "homo faber" in us, whose intellect, turned ever towards action, has become dominant. With the rise of speculative needs we have carried over into the sphere of disinterested metaphysics the methods of an instrument meant primarily for practical action. As LeRoy states the problem,¹¹ "Our intelligence has become utilitarian out of long habit and we must first free it from this thralldom. Our realizable knowledge is at every moment partial and limited rather than exterior and relative. To progress towards absolute knowledge we must extend experience, diversify it by science, correct the disturbing effect of action, and quicken all the

¹⁰ From Bergson, through J. C. Meredith, "Critical Side of Bergson's Philosophy," *Westminster Review*, February, 1912.

¹¹ Edouard LeRoy, *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson*.

results by an effort of sympathy by which we feel the inner wealth of the object."

But it is not only by *inner* intuition that we touch reality. Perception is, in part, an intuition of the *outer* world. It is reality, though a limited part of it, which the senses give us. Hence, to a degree, intellect and science may touch reality. But without these intuitive perceptions the intellect would be a mere logic-chopping machine, a mill without grist from the real world. As it is, the intellect gives us only cinematograph pictures of a reality which is always moving faster than it, and always escaping it. Even modern mathematics, with its marvelous calculations of motion, only reduces the intervals between the "snap-shots." The "New Logic" also, which posits change and allows for new appearances, cannot catch the actual process by which the new appearances emerge.¹² Thus it is by intuition alone that we touch reality, and by intuition is meant instinct become self-conscious, a fusion

¹² Professor Edward G. Spaulding, one of the leaders of the school of "New Realism," said to me, "Bergson attacks the truth-getting ability of science. This is because he identifies all logic with Aristotelian logic, which proceeds on the principle of purely additive relationships. He ignores the 'new logic' which allows for new appearances."

between the instinct of the animal and the intellect of man.

But our intuitions can find expression only through language, and this means concepts. Our concepts, however, should be less rigid, more fluid, than they have been; molded more nearly on reality. Concepts are really metaphors, for metaphor is "the chosen instrument of philosophic thought." This must indeed be the case because reality overflows all the categories of the intellect. In the main, however, the function of the intellect, working through concepts, is a very practical thing. Its function is "to enumerate the principal possible attitudes of the thing (that is, the object of knowledge) towards us, as well as our best possible attitude towards it."¹³

Let me add two or three somewhat extended quotations from Bergson himself, that his theory of knowledge may be more clear to us:

. . . An intelligent being bears within himself the means to transcend his own nature.

He transcends himself, however, less than he wishes, less also than he imagines himself to do. The purely formal character of intelligence deprives it

¹³ Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. p. 54.

of the ballast necessary to enable it to settle itself on the objects that are of the most powerful interest to speculation. Instinct, on the contrary, has the desired materiality, but it is incapable of going so far in quest of its object; it does not speculate. Here we reach the point that most concerns our present inquiry. The difference that we shall now proceed to denote between instinct and intelligence is what the whole of this analysis was meant to bring out. We formulate it thus: *There are things that intelligence alone is able to seek, but which, by itself, it will never find. These things instinct alone could find; but it will never seek them.*¹⁴

Instinct is sympathy. If this sympathy could extend its object and also reflect upon itself, it would give us the key to vital operations—just as intelligence, developed and disciplined, guides us into matter. For—we cannot too often repeat it—intelligence and instinct are turned in opposite directions, the former towards inert matter, the latter towards life. Intelligence, by means of science, which is its work, will deliver up to us more and more completely the secret of physical operations; of life it brings us, and, moreover, only claims to bring us, a translation in terms of inertia. It goes all round life, taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it. But it is to the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us—by intuition I mean instinct that has

¹⁴ Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. Mitchell's translation, p. 151.

become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely.¹⁵

In conclusion, we may remark that there is nothing mysterious in this faculty (the faculty of intuition). Every one of us has had occasion to exercise it to a certain extent. Any one of us, for instance, who has attempted literary composition knows that when the subject has been studied at length, the materials all collected, and the notes all made, something more is needed in order to set about the work of composition itself, and that is an often very painful effort to place ourselves directly at the heart of the subject, and to seek as deeply as possible an impulse, after which we need only let ourselves go. This impulse, once received, starts the mind on a path where it rediscovers all the information it had collected, and a thousand other details besides; it develops and analyses itself into terms which could be enumerated indefinitely. The farther we go, the more terms we discover; we shall never say all that could be said, and yet, if we turn back suddenly upon the impulse that we feel behind us, and try to seize it, it is gone; for it was not a thing, but the direction of a movement, and though indefinitely extensible, it is infinitely simple. Metaphysical intuition seems to be something of the same kind. What corresponds here to the documents and notes of literary composition is the sum of observations and experience gathered

¹⁵ Bergson, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

together by positive science. For we do not obtain an intuition from reality—that is, an intellectual sympathy with the most intimate part of it—unless we have won its confidence by a long fellowship with its superficial manifestations.¹⁶

There are several vital religious values which this phase of Bergson's thought conserves and fosters. In the first place, for those who accept this epistemology, there is an end of skepticism and agnosticism—of the radical sort, I mean. To be sure Carr holds¹⁷ that, on the contrary, this view of the intellect must itself end in skepticism. He admits that Bergson himself is not a skeptic but says that "he (Bergson) states admirably the argument which leads to skepticism—a new Hume—." By skepticism Carr means "the view that our ideas and beliefs are due to categories that are valid only within the sphere of my activity and unable to solve the problem raised by that activity itself."

I do not care to argue the prior question. Certainly, if Bergson's intuitive foundation breaks down, the superstructure of real knowl-

¹⁶ Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 89-91.

¹⁷ H. Wildon Carr, *op. cit.*

edge of the Real will fall with it. But our thesis is: "Granted the philosophic sub-structure, then what?" The answer must be, without a doubt: The "Day View" of life; a feeling of confidence in our senses, that they cannot all be fooled all the time; a feeling of confidence in our intuitions, provided they spring out of a wide experience with fact and are properly tested by fact and reason; in other words, a general confidence in ourselves and in our ability to get at the heart and meaning of life.

As we look about us, we do indeed realize that nature is more than we can see, and that even what we see is colored by the memory of past experiences, a memory which fastens itself instinctively upon the practical elements of the new experience, ignoring the rest. Still, our apprehension of things may be taken much as the "common-sense" view indicates, "Things *are* what they seem"—in the main, and so far as our knowledge goes. Our knowledge of matter is not "relative," with the *Ding-an-Sich* of Reality lurking entirely concealed and forever concealed behind mere appearance—a Spencerian "Unknowable"; our knowledge is merely "limited," which is quite

another thing. We cut out of the whole small sections suited to our practical needs, but within the portions thus cut out we come to grips with reality itself, limited and also colored, but nevertheless real. Thus, in our ordinary external relationships, we are brought back into the realm of confidence, to a reality which is ultimate, as far as it goes.

This spirit of confidence touches also those intuitions of a more distinctively inward nature—those reactions of the whole personality which yield insight. Under other circumstances we should have to examine in detail the claims of these intuitions to validity and certainty. Here we need but remark that Bergson teaches that Truth exists, and that the intuition can get at it. Differing from the pragmatists here as at other points, Bergson does not hold that truth is “what works.” Neither do we ourselves create truth. As Carr says,

Bergson does not hold that truth is mutable. That evolution has produced intellect does not affect the theory of the nature of truth. That intellect is a product of life activity is different from saying that the understanding makes truth or that truth itself is a product of the life activity.

Thus Bergson combats radical skepticism and agnosticism by maintaining that the intuition enables us to grasp truth directly, even though only partially. Certainly there are practical tests of logic and of fact that may be applied, and Bergson recognizes that such tests must be applied. He has said most explicitly that, "Notwithstanding his high valuation of intuition, he thought it should always be tested by verification; regarding intuition as a valuable guideboard, but one that, like other guideboards, might point wrong."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the truth is self-evidencing, in the main, and the "witness of the spirit" not only *must* be trusted but *can* be trusted. In this direction, clearly, Bergson is on the side of religion. If one grants that the blow has landed, then it is inevitably a death blow to the worst enemy of religion among modern educated classes. He replaces the pale and hardening features of the agnostic with the joyous freshness of the believer. "Ye *shall* know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." Religion cannot subsist on mere hypotheses,

¹⁸ This statement was made by Bergson to Mr. Henry Holt during Bergson's lecture tour in the United States.

cut and dried. It thrives only on a profound conviction of the reality of its object. Bergsonism is not only compatible with this conviction but directly fosters it.

But religion needs not only the conviction of the reality of its object. It needs also the conviction that the *total* reality of God is ever beyond the power of man to embrace. In other words, religion thrives in the region between complete agnosticism and absolute knowledge. If we cannot know God at all, we cannot worship. If we should know Him *all*, we *would* not worship. The religious man is a "merognostic." He knows "in part," but only in part. Beyond his partial knowledge stretch the illimitable regions of awe and mystery. If he is truly religious he will have within him, to a degree at least,

A sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man—
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking beings, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

As we have seen, it is just this sort of knowledge, real but partial, which Bergson's theory offers to us. In this regard, also, it favors the growth of that "sense sublime" which is of the very essence of religion.

In one way this theory of knowledge is even more favorable to religion than other theories which also profess to lead us to final reality. The method of approach to reality, according to Bergson, is primarily non-intellectual. We need not linger at this point over the charge of anti-intellectual and anti-scientific bias. Our business now is to bring out the fact that Bergson's philosophical approach to reality is primarily non-intellectual, and that the religious approach to reality (God) is also fundamentally non-intellectual. It is noteworthy that religion periodically breaks out against intellect and against culture, as if it had an instinctive sense of danger lurking therein. Bergson is charged with a similar outbreak, and the charge has a measure of basis to it. Surely some kinship must exist here.

The kinship is between the "intuition" of Bergson and the "faith" of the religious man. They are not to be identified with one another,

but they are clearly related. Widen the channel of intuition and personalize fundamental reality and you have the essence of religious faith. Bergson's influence is on the side of a faith which is neither pure intellectual belief nor yet mere emotional mysticism. The religious faith of a Bergsonian would indeed be mystical. What religious faith is *not* more or less mystical? But his mysticism would spring out of a wealth of fact, would be filled with and supported by fact. It is important to recognize at this point the continuous and salutary relationship which, according to Bergson, should exist between intuition on the one hand, and science and intellect on the other hand. If this *rapprochement* were carried over into the realm of religious faith, it might aid religion in realizing the happy mean between anti-cultural fanaticism and easy-going worldliness or dry intellectualism.

This kinship between intuition and religious faith yields still another result. In it one may find a philosophical basis for the validity of religious knowledge *per se*. The religious sense is not to be subjected to other phases of man's conscious life. It does not derive its

charter from them. Like the conscience, like the reason, it, too, is primal, autonomous, direct from the hand of God. Religion's contribution to man's whole view of life, of present action, and of future destiny, must be reckoned with as a fact not to be read out of court unless all facts are to be read out of court. Like other facts of a different kind—facts of conscience, facts of reason—the religious fact must be tested before its validity can be judged, but its potential validity must be admitted as easily as the potential validity of any other class of facts.

This conclusion, inevitable upon the Bergsonian basis, removes the veil which hides from many the inherent dignity of religion. Veiled religion has been; scarred oftentimes by the well-calculated blows of her enemies and the ill-calculated blows of her friends; but the veil and the scars serve but to emphasize her long and continued existence and her compelling charm for man. She charms because Reality is beneath her features. If, as Bergson allows us to infer, she is not inferior to other phases of human experience, not eliminable, then by her very nature she must be superior to them,

for she bears us up into the region of destiny; and one's view of destiny necessarily becomes either a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire, as one treads the path through that portion of destiny which we call the human life. Is it too much to say, then, that religious knowledge is the crown of all knowledge, according to Bergsonian implications?

I shall draw but one more religious inference from Bergson's theory of knowledge. This will appear positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable, according to one's previous religious convictions. It has to do with the place and nature of creed and dogma. The nature and function of dogma are noon-day clear to the Bergsonian. Dogmas are intellectual concepts adopted by a religious organization as its basis. The nature of intellect is such that the dogmas it formulates cannot give us the absolute truth. They are not themselves absolute and never can be. They are cinematograph views of the truth, which always overflows all their clear-cut limits. Yet they may, and probably always do, *contain* truth because they usually spring out of real intuitions of the final truth. Dogmas are therefore necessarily

metaphorical in nature and, as a matter of fact, should be so; for metaphors are fluid and therefore best adapted for a progressive representation of the living and growing reality which dogma seeks vainly to catch.

A too logical and intellectualistic conception of dogma has led to several unfortunate results. It has created the false pride of a supposed and yet impossible achievement. It has generated the inquisitorial method and spirit. It has hampered and, in certain quarters, altogether stopped healthy progress. And, most unfortunate of all, it has tended to take away the emphasis from vital religion and to place it upon an external formulation. The greater plasticity of dogma, if molded on Bergsonian lines, would, perhaps, enable it to portray and embody more nearly the life it is supposed to represent.

In addition to this metaphorical phase of dogma, Bergson's teaching would suggest another phase which some might think more practical and important. I can best describe it in the very words used by Bergson to describe our ordinary knowledge. "To think of an object," he says,

. . . in the usual meaning of the word "think"—is to take one or more of these immobile views of its mobility. It consists, in short, in asking from time to time where the object is, in order that we may know what to do with it. Nothing could be more legitimate, moreover, than this method of procedure, so long as we are concerned only with a practical knowledge of reality. Knowledge, in so far as it is directed to practical matters, has only to enumerate the principal possible attitudes of the thing towards us, as well as our best possible attitude towards it.¹⁹

If, in the above quotation, we substitute the word "God" for the words "thing" and "object," we shall have a very good description of this phase of dogma, according to Bergson. Dogmas are practical formulations designed to enable men to see and to assume life's proper relationships. Being practical, they must be suited to the age for which they are made. Being suited to the age for which they are made, they become unsuited to the ages for which they were not made and therefore must undergo periodical remodelling. To use the words of Bergson, the function of dogma "consists, in short, in asking from time to time where the object (God) is, in order

¹⁹ Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 54.

that we may know what to do with it (Him)."

With a few changes this sentence could be turned into an ideal definition of dogma—a definition and a conception of dogma whose absence or denial has cost the Church and religion more than man can ever calculate; a conception whose hearty and intelligent acceptance is one of the crying needs of modern organized Christianity. All that fair-minded liberals ask of the Church is that she should ask anew, "from time to time," where God is, in order that we may know (anew) "what to do with Him." In an historical religion such as Christianity, such a creed would include, of course, statements regarding Jesus Christ; his place in revealing God's attitude towards man; his function as the inspirer of "our best possible attitude" towards God.

Finally, just as intuition is dumb without conceptual language, according to Bergson, so a Bergsonian faith would *need* dogma as a medium of expression and as an aid to self-propagation. Language and concepts are part and parcel of the social life of man. Similarly, if we are to have organized religion, we must have dogma. Sabatier's words cor-

rectly portray the position a Bergsonian religionist must take regarding the necessity of dogma. "Dogma therefore is a phenomenon of social life. One cannot conceive either dogma without a Church, or of a Church without dogma. The two notions are correlative and inseparable."²⁰ With Sabatier, also, a Bergsonian would hold that dogmas are mutable; that they do not "die fatally the moment they are touched by criticism"; that, though necessary to religion, they do not "form the essence of religion."²¹

To the symbolic view of dogma, therefore, which Sabatier also makes fundamental, the Bergsonian dogmatist would add a non-symbolic and very practical element. His creed would "enumerate the principal possible attitudes of God towards us, as well as our best possible attitude towards Him"; and this for the very practical purpose of inspiring right faith and action.

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Thus Bergson leads us to a clear-cut theory of religious knowledge which places prime

²⁰ A. Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*. Seed's translation, p. 229.

²¹ A. Sabatier, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

emphasis upon faith, religious experience, and religious insight, but also insists upon the place and value of dogma when properly conceived. Though unsatisfying to extreme dogmatists, this view is certainly not anti-religious or even anti-dogmatic. There are elements in it which ought to appeal to the warm-hearted representatives of the "evangelical" type, and, as a whole, it will be welcomed by all true religionists who long for God, but are weary of some of His dogmatic, self-appointed emissaries.

CHAPTER IV

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

WIDELY accepted as the theory of evolution has been for years, its thorough-going application to philosophy has usually been apparent rather than real. Hegel and Spencer will be summoned to bear witness against this statement and, it will be contended, Haeckel was thorough-going enough to satisfy the most ardent. But Hegel's Absolute remained unmoved and immovable while the drama of life unfolded. *Manifestations* moved, changed, "evolved"; but *reality itself* did not move, change, or progress. Spencer, on his part, had a picture-block idea of the evolutionary process. As Bergson points out, Spencer merely brings together the severed parts of a previous plan which he himself had sketched and then cut up into bits. Spencerian evolution is, fitting these bits together again according to the preconceived plan. Haeckel's scheme rests upon enormous assumptions which stagger the minds of the unthinking, but fill the minds of

the penetrating with a deep suspicion that the real process of life has escaped him.

In spite of serious defection, the ranks of the Hegelian evolutionists still manifest strength, manned largely, if not wholly, by representatives of the intellectual aristocracy. These are the "vested interests" of current philosophy. The more patently mechanical views of Spencer, however, and especially those of Haeckel, have become, in a degenerate form, a popular fetich with consequent far-reaching influence. It is such conceptions as these which vulgar shouters usually mean by the word, "evolution," and their vociferousness has often been quite as offensive to evolutionists as to those who reject evolution. Blind, mechanical evolutionism has also become a sort of general utility man on the stages of the scientist, the historian, and the philosopher, and by its use they have often deceived themselves, as well as others, regarding the validity of their explanations and the progress of life and thought. But, as Lovejoy says,¹ "Evolution and mechanism are really profoundly uncongenial notions."

¹ A. O. Lovejoy, "The Metaphysician of the Life Force," *New York Nation*, September 30, 1909.

It is no wonder that evolution has become the synonym for Anti-Christ in the minds of so many sincere religious people. We have all suffered in many ways at the hands of its more blatant, coarse, and ignorant exponents. The common propagandist, who parades the names of Comte, Spencer, and Haeckel, usually has not one-tenth the reverence which Comte had, or which Spencer certainly had. But religious believers far more intelligent than those I had in mind just now have been oppressed, if not actually repelled, not merely by unworthy representatives of these great evolutionary systems, but also by the philosophical systems themselves and by their evident effect upon the chosen few as well as upon the rabble. Thus a great idea, in whose good we all share whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not—a great idea whose essential truth we shall not be able to escape—this idea has been made the chief point of attack by many theologians. They attack it, believing that it is an idea essentially subversive of true religion, being deceived by the first attempts to formulate the theory, by the shallowness and vulgarity of many of its

popular forms, or by their own ignorance of the significance of the theory itself.

But it was not left to theologians alone to assail these forms of the evolutionary theory. Sudden mutations in the development of species, and the rapid appearance of entirely new forms of life, challenged the thought of the biologists. The "Vitalistic School" arose, with its distrust of the prevailing theories. It was not a distrust of evolution itself. Far from it. It was rather a distrust of that carefully articulated system of deterministic evolution by which every successive phase of life was thought to be a *mere* unfolding of what had previously existed; a distrust of that theory according to which all life is a *mere* collocation of previously existing elements—a collocation whose rise could be adequately explained, whose meaning fully fathomed, by bare analysis, and a careful resolution of the whole into its constituent "parts."

Further, a reaction from the rarefied air of idealism, and a plunge into the stream of real men and things, gave rise to the pragmatic cult of William James and his disciples. They maintain that life is not only unfixed and un-

determined, but that the truth—reality itself—is whatever the changing fortunes of life stamp as “workable.” Spontaneity and unexpectedness are the fundamental characteristics of life, not mechanism and a dead certainty. The “New Realists,” also,² hold that the universe is wide open. “The degree of unity, consistency, or connection subsisting among entities is a matter to be empirically ascertained. . . . In the present stage of our knowledge there is a presumption in favor of pluralism . . . there is a present presumption in favor of the hypothesis that the world as a whole is less unified than are certain of its parts.”

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It is Henri Bergson who has combined the Open Door Theory³ with a thorough-going application of the principle of evolution. In *Time and Free Will* he propounds his theory

² “The Program and First Platform of Six Realists,” in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, etc.*, 1910, vii: 393. Reprinted as an appendix to *The New Realism*. Macmillan, New York, 1912.

³ I do not mean by this to identify Bergson either with the pragmatists or with the new realists. They are not identifiable by any means, but they are all alike in their opposition to the closed door of mechanical evolution and of absolutistic determinism.

of "Duration," and in *Creative Evolution* he develops the same idea into a distinctly new evolutionary theory, in which the universe is pictured as the result of the Vital Impetus (the *élan vital*) at the basis of things. Carr thus describes it: ⁴

. . . reality is change, not something that changes, becoming, not something that becomes, duration, not something that endures. When we place ourselves in this becoming, time appears to us as the very life of things, as fundamental reality. . . .

A self-sufficing reality is not a timeless reality. Instead of the logical or mathematical conception of a being eternally given once for all, a being whose other is absolute naught, and which is only definable in terms that involve this supposed idea, we have a reality whose essence is time duration. The absolute is psychological, not mathematical nor logical in its essence.

The essential connection between Bergson's theory of evolution and his idea of "Duration" makes it important that we tarry for a moment to make the latter conception clear. This may best be done in his own words.

⁴ H. W. Carr, "Bergson's Theory of Knowledge," *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1908-1909. New Series, IX: 45, 52.

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our *ego* lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. For this purpose it need not be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea; for then, on the contrary, it would no longer *endure*. Nor need it forget its former states: it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another.

Might it not be said that, even if these notes succeed one another, yet we perceive them in one another, and that their totality may be compared to a living being whose parts, although distinct, permeate one another just because they are so closely connected? The proof is that, if we interrupt the rhythm by dwelling longer than is right on one note of the tune, it is not its exaggerated length, as length, which will warn us of our mistake, but the qualitative change thereby caused in the whole of the musical phrase.

We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which

would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space.⁵

We should therefore distinguish two forms of multiplicity, two very different ways of regarding duration, two aspects of conscious life. Below homogeneous duration, which is the extensive symbol of true duration, a close psychological analysis distinguishes a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined states, a self in which *succeeding each other* means *melting into one another* and forming an organic whole.⁶

These quotations clearly show that, according to Bergson, nothing at all is static, unless it is absolutely dead. Everything that lives also moves and grows, though it may move in two directions, that is, towards the inert or towards more life. Duration is this continual movement, change, life, progress. Upon this substructure rests the Bergsonian theory of evolution. Let us summarize it.⁷

⁵ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. English translation by Pogson, pp. 100-101.

⁶ Bergson, *op. cit.*, p. 128. Cf. also pp. 228-229.

⁷ Cf. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *passim*. The following summary is largely, in fact almost entirely, in Bergson's own language, but I have not used quotation marks because of the way in which sentences and phrases have been cast together.

The cause of evolution is not adaptation to environment, either in the sense which ascribes to the environment the controlling power, that is, natural selection, or in the sense which seeks the explanation of the resulting phenomena in an effort put forth by the individual organisms; nor is evolution due, as the finalists say, to an original plan (and Planner) which foresees every detail and plans each modification with an end in view. In all these ideas there is some truth, but the real cause is the Vital Impetus, the life impulse, which forces itself into matter as an arm may be thrust into a mass of iron filings which are thus rearranged by the movement. The new arrangement of the filings due to new movements of the arm is, of course, in a broad sense, the result of this vital "Cause," but the position and relations of each particular filing are not planned in the sense that each particular effect corresponds to a particular cause.

Much less can it be said that the nature and structure of the organism, which is propelled by the Vital Impetus, are *controlled* by the surrounding conditions, though they are doubtless *affected* by them. The Vital Im-

petus, or life impulse, is the controlling factor. Thus neither mechanism nor finalism explains evolution. The outside conditions limit the form and motion of the organism but the driving power is from within. This inner life power does not foresee or plan the particular effects it will produce. In fact it cannot. It drives ahead to unforeseen and unforeseeable results. The mystery of the universe comes from the fact that we want it all created at one stroke or the whole of matter to be eternal. The root of the difficulty is that we think the Absolute can have no place in concrete time. Once this prejudice is eradicated, the idea of creation becomes more clear, for it is merged in that of growth. But, then, we must not speak of the universe in its totality, for the universe is not made, but is being made continually. In vital activity we see a reality which is making itself in a reality which is un-making itself.

The life of the body is on the road that leads to the life of the spirit. The current of life flows on, subdividing itself into individuals, creating new souls continually which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed,

little rills into which the great river of life subdivides itself, flowing through the body of humanity. A self-sufficient reality is not necessarily a reality foreign to duration. We must strive to see in order to see and no longer to see in order to act. Then the Absolute is revealed very near us and, in a certain measure, in us. It is of a psychological and not of a mathematical or of a logical essence. It lives with us. It endures. Time is necessary to growth, to creation, and we realize that there is a progressive growth of the Absolute and, in evolution, a continual invention of forms ever new.

Bergson stoutly upholds the validity of the general idea of evolution, concluding a discussion of this point in these words:

Will it not, therefore, be better to stick to the letter of transformism as almost all scientists profess it? Apart from the question to what extent the theory of evolution describes the facts and to what extent it symbolizes them, there is nothing in it that is irreconcilable with the doctrines it has claimed to replace, even with that of special creations, to which it is usually opposed. For this reason we think the language of transformism forces itself now upon all

philosophy, as the dogmatic affirmation of transformism forces itself upon science.⁸

Our author holds that the real cause of evolution lies deeper than any mere adaptation to environment, although adaptation has a large part to play. He says:

The truth is that adaptation explains the sinuosities of the movement of evolution, but not its general directions, still less the movement itself. The road that leads to the town is obliged to follow the ups and downs of the hills; it *adapts itself* to the accidents of the ground; but the accidents of the ground are not the cause of the road, nor have they given it its direction. At every moment they furnish it with what is indispensable, namely, the soil on which it lies; but if we consider the whole of the road, instead of each of its parts, the accidents of the ground appear only as impediments or causes of delay, for the road aims simply at the town and would fain be a straight line. Just so as regards the evolution of life and the circumstances through which it passes—with this difference, that evolution does not mark out a solitary route, that it takes directions without aiming at ends, and that it remains inventive even in its adaptations.⁹

The following quotation indicates clearly

⁸ *Creative Evolution*. English translation, pp. 24-26.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

Bergson's teleological position. This bears so directly upon certain phases of the religious problem that it should receive most careful attention.

It must not be forgotten that the force which is evolving throughout the organized world is a limited force, which is always seeking to transcend itself and always remains inadequate to the work it would fain produce. The errors and puerilities of radical finalism are due to the misapprehension of this point. It has represented the whole of the living world as a construction analogous to a human work. All the pieces have been arranged with a view to the best possible functioning of the machine. Each species has its reason for existence, its allotted place; and all join together, as it were, in a musical concert, wherein the seeming discords are really meant to bring out a fundamental harmony. In short, all goes on in nature as in the works of human genius, where, though the result may be trifling, there is at least perfect adequacy between the object made and the work of making it.

Nothing of the kind in the evolution of life. There, the disproportion is striking between the work and the result. From the bottom to the top of the organized world we do, indeed, find one great effort; but most often this effort turns short, sometimes paralyzed by contrary forces, sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by

the form it is engaged in taking, hypnotized by it as by a mirror.¹⁰

Bergson's mysticism, with a touch that almost suggests pantheism, pervades the succeeding sentences:

From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a center, spreads outwards, and which on almost the whole of its circumference is stopped and converted into oscillation: at one single point the obstacle has been forced, the impulsion has passed freely. It is this freedom that the human form registers. Everywhere but in man, consciousness has had to come to a stand; in man alone it has kept on its way. Man, then, continues the vital movement indefinitely, although he does not draw along with him all that life carries in itself. On other lines of evolution there have traveled other tendencies which life implied, and of which, since everything interpenetrates, man has, doubtless, kept something, but of which he has kept only very little. *It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, Man or Superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way.*¹¹

After inveighing against the view which seeks to make the spiritual life immune from

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 266.

attack by removing it from the world of reality, Bergson says of the great questions—freedom, the existence of the soul, the supremacy of man, and personal survival,

All these questions will remain unanswered, a philosophy of intuition will be a negation of science, will be sooner or later swept away by science, if it does not resolve to see the life of the body just where it really is, on the road that leads to the life of the spirit. But it will then no longer have to do with definite living beings. Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter. On the greater part of its surface, at different heights, the current is converted by matter into a vortex. At one point alone it passes freely, dragging with it the obstacle which will weigh on its progress but will not stop it. At this point is humanity: it is our privileged situation.

On the other hand, this rising wave is consciousness, and, like all consciousness, it includes potentialities without number. . . . Thus souls are continually being created, which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed. They are nothing else than the little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity.¹²

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 268-270.

This is Bergson's idea of the ultimate reality of the universe, and it is to this idea that we must adjust our conception of God if we are to be both religious and Bergsonian. Can this be done? That is the question.

It must be remembered that Bergson has not yet discussed the idea of God in its religious aspects. He has thus far chiefly sought to find out the underlying nature and explanation of biological facts. The moral and religious nature of man, his social history and arrangements, have not yet been Bergson's concern, that is, in his hitherto published works. Therefore, I take it, we would be unfair to Bergson himself should we attempt to identify the Vital Impetus, as thus far expounded, with the God of religion. The question presents itself rather in this form: Is this philosophical explanation of the facts of existence compatible with belief in the existence of a God who would satisfy the cravings of a religious heart? And further: Does this philosophical conception suggest or compel, in one's thought of God, any modifications which a religious man might consistently accept, or even welcome? If so, what are these

modifications and what is their practical significance?

Now there are difficulties which the religious man feels at once when he understands clearly the meaning of this philosophy. Some may feel with Corbière¹³ that

Bergson ascribes to God consciousness and liberty but only in a vague way. . . . Life alone is clear and God is hardly more than the central hearth of the universe's energy. . . . He is entirely immanent. . . . Bergson's conception leads to pantheism.

Corbière admits that Bergson's thought marks a reaction against the positivist, the agnostic, and the atheist, but holds that his evolutionary monism is, in the end, destructive of belief in a personal God. Pluralism, and not monism, is the correct answer.

In the minds of many others, Bergson has indeed been associated with current forms of pluralism. Sir Oliver Lodge, in an article in which he discusses Bergson very sympathetically,¹⁴ says,

¹³ Charles Corbière, "Le dieu de M. Bergson," *Revue de théologie*, 1910.

¹⁴ Sir Oliver Lodge, "Bergson's Intuitive Philosophy Justified," *Current Literature*, April, 1912.

I am impressed with two things—first, with the reality and activity of powerful but not almighty helpers, to whom we owe guidance and management and reasonable control: and next, with the fearful majesty of still higher aspects of the Universe, infinitely beyond our utmost possibility of thought.

Sir Oliver seems to find in Bergson support for his pluralistic views.

In a very acute and discriminative article, Muirhead says,¹⁵

[There is no] conclusive ground for identifying M. Bergson with an out-and-out pluralism. . . . That there is a pluralistic side to Professor Bergson's philosophy has been already admitted to the full. He is the champion of process. He carries on an incessant war against the conception of a "bloc universe." . . . If all is this movement, "incessant life, action, liberty," what room is there for the fixed thoughts and purposes that theists attribute to the Creator, or for the all-embracing and therefore all-limiting absolute of the pantheist? Pluralistic, too, is his conception of the two currents within this creative movement. Life, we are told, is one movement, matter is the inverse movement; each is simple and individual in itself. . . . But we have already seen reason to be

¹⁵ Muirhead, Review of Bergson's work, in the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911.

on our guard against the mere form of expression in so many-sided a writer. . . . So far from resting in any facile pluralism, he is led by the very depths of his own monism to reject the current statements of it. His philosophy may be said to be in reality an appeal from a shallower to a deeper form of unity.

It is easy to see the practical dualism of Bergson's distinction between mind and matter, but it is also perfectly clear that both mind and matter owe their existence, according to him, to the Vital Impetus. As Muirhead says, "Yet there is unity under all." Bergson himself has said, "It is probable that matter and consciousness have a common origin. Neither can be explained by itself." In my judgment, Bergson is more open to the charge of being a monistic pantheist than to that of being a pluralist. But I hold with Corrance¹⁶ that "Bergson's Creator is immanent in nature, but not, like the God of pantheism, identical with it."

LeRoy, the modernist defender and interpreter of Bergson, says, referring to Bergson's thought,

¹⁶ H. C. Corrance, "Bergson's Philosophy and the Idea of God," *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1914.

We cannot regard the source of our life otherwise than as personal. We cannot regard Him as impersonal. We seek in Him our personality. God is personal in that He is the Source of our personality. He is immanent in us but also transcends us and also the world.¹⁷

Bergson himself says,¹⁸

The considerations set forth in my "Essay on the Immediate Facts of Consciousness" (*Time and Free Will*) are intended to bring to light the fact of liberty; those in *Matter and Memory* touch upon the reality of the spirit; those in *Creative Evolution* present creation as a fact. From all this we derive a clear idea of a free and creating God, producing matter and life at once, whose creative effort is continued, in a vital direction, by the evolution of species and the construction of human personalities.

The most definite word on this subject, from Bergson himself, has been given to us through the interview secured by Louis Levine.¹⁹

This source of life (God) is undoubtedly spiritual. Is it personal? Probably. There are not sufficient data to answer this question, but Professor Bergson

¹⁷ Cf. Nicholas Balthaser, "Le problème de dieu d'après la philosophie nouvelle," *Revue néo-scholastique*, November, 1907, and February, 1908. 14: 449-489. 15: 90-124.

¹⁸ Cf. letter of Bergson in *Annals of Christian Philosophy*. Quoted by LeRoy in *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson*.

¹⁹ Louis Levine, in the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

is inclined to think that it is personal. It seems to him that personality is in the very intention of the evolution of life, and that the human personality is just one mode in which this intention is realized.

It is, therefore, very probable that the spiritual source of life whence our personality springs should be personal in itself. Of course, personal in a different way, without all those accidental traits which in our minds form part of personality and which are bound up with the existence of the body. But personal in a larger sense of the term—a spiritual unity expressing itself in the creative process of evolution.

This language is clear, so far as it goes. The question is, does it indicate compatibility with a theistic view of the world? Kant said, "The deist believes that there is a God; the theist that there is a living God." The former is purely rational, the latter is connected with revelation. The theist thinks of God "as a Being who, by intelligence and freedom, as originator of the cosmos, contains within Himself the ground of all things. He thinks of God as entering into personal relations with men; as the Controller of the world whose course He directly affects."²⁰

²⁰ Cf. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, article on "Theism."

Unless by "intelligence" we must mean deterministic finalism, it may unhesitatingly be said that Bergson's position is in general conformity with the description of theism just given. Nevertheless, a recent re-reading of certain portions of *Creative Evolution* has impressed me afresh with the ready adaptability of much of Bergson's language to the uses of the pantheist. We need but to think of some of the paragraphs already quoted:

Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear *as a wave which rises . . . this rising wave is consciousness . . . On flows the current*, running through human generations, *subdividing itself into individuals . . . Thus souls . . . are nothing else than the little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity.*

But one must always remember Muirhead's caution about driving Bergson's language too hard. We must judge the language of *Creative Evolution* in the light of its material and of its aim. Without the introduction of unwarranted theological terminology, we could not expect to have in such a work a description of the Vital Impetus in terms that

would clearly avoid the possibility of pantheistic interpretation. Bergson may eventually come out in behalf of pantheism, but the implicates of the principles he has already laid down, as well as his own occasional statements, point in a more theistic direction. Again, we must bear in mind the continual polemic Bergson wages not only against views which are clearly antagonistic to religion but also against views which have hitherto been the chief props of theistic religion, such as those of the radical finalists. This polemic affects his language and must be taken into account in interpreting his words.

Still, one must readily grant that Bergson's doctrine leads to a mystic faith which is not entirely dissimilar to certain aspects of pantheism; but should we not ask, at the same time, whether there is not some truth in pantheism, in spite of its defects? No religious thinker today should refuse to allow that the pantheistic faiths of the East present phases of truth, good, and beauty which have too generally escaped occidentals—spiritual emphases which we sorely need. One of those religious lessons for which the West needs to go to school to

the East again, has to do with the central religious conception of incarnation. No doubt the extreme emphasis of each hemisphere is wrong in its extremeness. Certainly the un-Christian character of so much of our western, so-called "Christian," civilization has been due in part to a failure to realize, even in theory, the exact nature of the Christian revelation. It is my confident belief that oriental Christians will prove to be not mere recipients of the Gospel, but active interpreters of it, and that western conceptions of the Christian incarnation will be the richer therefor and truer to the original type. At any rate, we have of late been learning again from the East and modifying our too rigid and unvital conceptions.

Bergsonism avoids both extremes, the Indian and the Scholastic, and through the doctrine of an Absolute which is not foreign to duration may prepare the way for a re-statement of this central concept of religion. It is a fair question, however, whether the necessary inferences from Bergson's thought in this direction, valuable as they may be by way of suggestion and criticism, will be acceptable to

a Christian believer. Certainly incarnation must be conceived of by a Bergsonian as qualitative and not quantitative. His position is clearly incompatible with a belief in the complete, quantitative incarnation of the Absolute in a single historical being. But there is a far more serious difficulty. The consistent Bergsonian must ever keep open the possibility of future incarnations which would surpass those already given. To most Christian believers the thought of a future improvement upon Christianity is thoroughly repugnant.

We are evidently face to face with something that cuts deep. Still, the case against Bergsonian compatibility with Christianity in this particular is not as simple as some would make it, although this depends, of course, upon one's idea of what is essential to Christianity. Let us look at the matter from several angles. In the first place, this conception of evolution, unlike others more dogmatic, does not make the passing of present norms *inevitable*. As far as positive prediction goes, one must be agnostic about the developments of the future. Granted a Bergsonian's acceptance of the Christian norm as regards the present, if, while

admitting the *possibility* of a more complete norm in the future, he believed in the improbability of the rise of such a norm, we could hardly deny him the name "Christian."

But would this not be a position incompatible with Bergsonism? Not necessarily. The fundamental Bergsonian attitude towards the future is not one of the possibility of this or the probability of that but, *as far as definite knowledge and prediction are concerned*, one of agnosticism. Might not a Bergsonian Christian consistently do what we all have to do in any case, namely, maintain a *faith* in the finality of the Christian revelation by basing it on trust in the character of God as thus far revealed to us? But let us examine the most extreme case, that of the Bergsonian who, impressed by the theory that life is "becoming," believes in the *probability* of the rise of new and superior religious norms in human life. If he gives his present adherence to the Christian norm, he should, I suppose, be called a Christian; and if his present norm is based on truth, we might conceive of the new norm not as excluding the present one but as including and expanding it. In such a case, while a new

historic center might, and probably would, create new names and forms, it would not thereby be necessarily incompatible with the old. The very principle of Christian growth itself might be summoned in support of such a position.²¹ Our conclusion, then, would be that even this extreme position might be considered compatible with Christianity, provided the norm-to-be supplanted the existing norm in an inclusive way.

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The foregoing discussion raises the whole question, hinted at a few moments ago, of intelligence and finalism, and we shall have to push our thought further on before we can decide whether the Bergsonian conception of evolution is compatible with theism, and especially with Christian theism.

According to Bergson,²² the great Life Power, the Vital Impetus, is neither omniscient

²¹ "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." John 12:24.

(Consider also the essential compatibility between Christianity and the highest achievements of the Hebrew Prophets; a compatibility insisted upon, in fact *overemphasized*, by orthodox Christianity from the beginning.)

²² Cf. *Creative Evolution*, Chapter I.

nor omnipotent. Evolution is not due, as the finalists say, to an original plan (and Planner) which foresees every detail and plans each modification with an end in view. Nor is it due to mere adaptation to environment. In such ideas there is, of course, some truth, but the real cause of evolution is the Vital Impetus. To be sure, everything is, in a broad sense, the "result" of this vital "cause," but the position and relations of particular things are not planned in the sense that each particular effect corresponds to a particular cause, or individual thought. Thus neither mechanism nor finalism explains evolution. The outside conditions limit the form and the motion of the organism, but the driving power is from within. This inner Life Power does not foresee or plan the particular effects it will produce. In fact, it cannot. It drives ahead to unforeseen and unforeseeable results. There is a progressive growth of the Absolute itself and, in evolution, a continual invention of forms ever new.

God is unceasing life, action, freedom. He had no beginning nor can we conceive of His having any end. He is not omnipotent; He is doing the best He

can with stubborn substance. He has not created the world yet; it is being created under our very eyes.²⁸

Now there is no doubt that this viewpoint is very disturbing to customary religious feeling; to many it will seem downright blasphemous. If there be no omniscience anywhere in the world, how can we be sure that "all things work together for good," even "to them that love God?" Even if there were omniscience, but without omnipotence, how could we be sure that the omnisciently wise plan could be carried out? We are so perplexed and uncertain ourselves oftentimes, not only about the future but also about the present, that it has been a great comfort to take refuge in the thought that God knows all from the beginning and that even all the details are in His hands. The remembrance of an all-wise and all-powerful Providence has undergirded our prayers and made us feel that their answer was certain. The thought of the unchangeable God, "the same yesterday, today, and forever," has been a rock of defense; the thought of Him as "infinite in His being

²⁸ Cf. *Current Literature*, May, 1911. 50: 518-520.

wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth," a source of solace and of strength to the humble worshiper conscious of his own finiteness, limitation, and weakness.

If God *grows*, does He not become too like ourselves to command the final homage of the heart? If God *grows*, how can we ever tell just what He is? Where are fixity of character, permanence of purpose, clearness of aim and end? Is not all final truth and certainty placed in jeopardy and our religious pyramid turned upon its apex? Such are the fearsome thoughts which assail us as we consider this phase of Bergson's teaching, and here many who might otherwise go with him will depart from him. Those who have all their days trusted in the omnipotence and omniscience of God can at most say: If this be true, at least give us time to make our readjustments lest all go down in wreck during the transition.

Let us try to look at the matter calmly and honestly. The prevailing theory has not been without its difficulties. It lays everything at the door of Providence, the good and the bad alike. In so doing it has been obliged to escape from a difficult dilemma. Either God is

the author of evil, at the least *particeps criminis*, or He is not omnipotent. The usual way of avoiding the dilemma has been to hold that God was not the "author" of evil but "permitted" it, preserving his omnipotence by "overruling" it for His ends. We have all seen good come out of evil, or so-called evil, and we are, therefore, familiar with the principle. Some have even risen with Paul to the point of "rejoicing in tribulation." Nor do I mean by that the common malingering of the ailing egotist. I mean the rare and easily abused, and as easily misunderstood, quality of a more than resigned acceptance of pain, hardship, and sorrow—an even glad acceptance of it—not merely in the faith that an inscrutable Providence "doeth all things well," but in the firm, and often partially verified, conviction that "truth heals the wounds which she herself hath made"; that pain and suffering build the path to the higher life, to the divine life itself.

Still, even the most believing sometimes experience difficulty in trying to cover existing evils with the mantle of a faith in an all-wise and all-powerful, not to say all-loving God.

At such times they would be relieved to be able to put aside that faith in favor of one which did not ascribe so much to God; in favor of a faith which, at the same time, continued to picture Him as the active and successful foe of evil, a protagonist who summons men to struggle rather than to mere acquiescence. I do not say that we should be relieved of the dilemma indicated, but I can understand the advantage possessed at times by one who could be so relieved.

The belief in a Providence which maps out every detail of our life is undoubtedly a belief full of energizing power and, to many, a vital thing. On the other hand, it is matter of common observation that it often results in a practical fatalism which induces laziness and a general irresponsibility necessitating extra activity and care on the part of those most nearly in contact with the "believers." General earnestness and initiative, and a sense of personal responsibility, are often displayed by those who have this faith, but seemingly at the expense of their logic. A faith that would not easily allow men to make religion an excuse for laziness, or a substitute for

personal responsibility, would have its advantages.

Then, too, belief in the existence of a divine plan, complete in all its details, has constantly engendered, as a corollary, faith in certain men's ability to acquire secret and relatively complete information regarding this plan, especially as regards impending events, or even those of the far distant future, including detailed knowledge of the lot and activities of the souls of men in the next world. This faith needs but its common accompaniment, an "exaggerated ego," to blossom out into the surreptitious or openly avowed assumption of omniscience by these men. They alone are the appointed channels for the dissemination of inspired information regarding the details of God's future plans. Sow the seed of this unsound theory of revelation in the fertile soil of credulity, still so marked a characteristic of the mass of religious believers, and there results a harvest of unlovely dogmatism, tyrannical domination, crass superstition, weakened will-power, and religious deterioration.

Belief in a Providence which consciously and purposely embraces every detail of existence

has also widely influenced the prayers of religious people, and not always helpfully. Believing in such a Providence, worshipers have not been content with a reverent acquiescence in the divine plan. They often besiege the Throne with a mass of petty petitions, seeking to overbear the divine will in favor of their desires. The Christian view of God does not banish petitionary prayer, but the kind just described is not Christian but pagan. This pagan view is nourished by a conception of revelation which finds ready rootage in the orthodox theory of Providence. This theory, also, is partly responsible for the spectacle regularly presented in times of war. Opposing warriors thank Providence for results that are manifestly incompatible, results also which, from any aspect, are often entirely abhorrent to neutrals who long for the Kingdom of God and pray that peace may speedily come, win who may.

I do not mean to imply that the question of war prayers is an easy question to answer, nor do I think the problem of prayer in general, from an intellectual standpoint, a simple one. I do not purpose here to discuss this matter in

itself. Nor do I need to do so. This phase of religion is introduced merely to illustrate my main point. It is my strong conviction that detailed petitions have their place, and will always have their place, in truly religious prayer; but if prayer and religion can be maintained on a vital basis and at the same time be freed from the narrowness, selfishness, superstition, and rank paganism of some forms of petitionary prayer, religion "pure and undefiled" will truly be the gainer. Whatever may be said against it, the Bergsonian view of Providence (and the conception would not be entirely lacking) would encourage a kind of prayer which would concern itself chiefly, if not solely, with the central spirit of life. It certainly would not encourage the nagging spirit so characteristic of paganism and so evident even in the prayers of many Christians.

Further, the thought of an omnipotent, omniscient, and unchanging Being is one that leaves us cold. That this feeling has been general is clear from the fact that men have always manifested an increased interest in go-betweens, mediators, some way of bringing God nearer and of making Him more human,

whenever the thought of Him has tended towards these abstract extremes. Who has not sometimes had the feeling that it was a little unfair for the omnipotent and omniscient God to judge human beings created by Him, apart from their own choice, in a state of comparative ignorance and weakness? The immeasurable gap between us and God, so conceived, has sometimes interfered with religious communion rather than helped it. The history of post-exilic Judaism, to quote but one example, is a proof of this fact.

Now Bergson's idea of a growing God—one who has His limitations, battles, and even defeats—has its own difficulties to meet and is novel to our ordinary thought, but it is an idea which we occasionally wish were true. Instead of being a lapse from truly religious thinking, it may possibly be on the road to new truth. Mayhap the loss of grandeur (though we must not think that God, thus conceived, would be without power and grandeur, or without the elements of awe and mystery) might be offset by a greater sense of sympathy, companionship, and coöperation. God would actually need our help and our help would

count vitally; the Christian thought that "we are co-workers with God" would then exist in fact and not merely in name. Yet the last control would remain with Him and, while He would not be all-powerful, He would be the most powerful—powerful *enough*. Would such a conception harm religion, or would it help it?

All these offsets make us see that we cannot cavalierly dismiss the possibility of a vital religious faith being maintained upon this Bergsonian basis. But still the lack of plan and purpose remains to plague us. How can we think of God as God at all if He does not know what the end is? The interest so many of us have in the omnipotence and the omniscience of God is due to a very natural longing for stability in life. Our knowledge is limited and often faulty. We are painfully aware of our impotence in the face of many an obstacle, in the face of evil, pain, disease, and death. We seek a faith which will enable us to put our feet upon a rock. To many, if not to most, that rock has been the omnipotence and the omniscience of God. He knows even if we do not know. He can accomplish even if we can-

not accomplish. Take away this rock and we shall be plunged into the ever-moving waves of uncertainty and aimless flux. The waves may ebb or they may flow. It does not matter much. They do not, in either case, bear us any whither.

Is this true? If so, then we must dismiss Bergson from the ranks of those who are on the side of religion. Certainly, if Bergson entirely eliminated the teleological element from life, it would be impossible for us to hold that his thought is compatible with religion. But he states clearly that he does not do so. He does not deny the truth of finalism, only of a certain kind of finalism. To be sure, the kind of finalism which he denies is that which is current among us, that which makes every detail a part of the pre-arranged divine plan or, conversely, subsumes every detail under the goal to be reached. Both of these, Bergson says, are the same scheme, the one being merely the inverse of the other. They are both mechanical, he holds; indeed they are contrary to fact and involved in great difficulties both theoretical and practical.

But, contrary to common opinion of him,

Bergson does not put mere flux in the place of these two discarded theories. He says,

. . . we try on the evolutionary progress the two ready-made garments that our understanding puts at our disposal, mechanism and finality; we show that they do not fit, neither the one nor the other, but that one of them (finality) might be recut and resewn, and in this new form fit less badly than the other.²⁴

Yet finalism is not, like mechanism, a doctrine with fixed rigid outlines. It admits of as many inflections as we like. The mechanistic philosophy is to be taken or left: it must be left if the least grain of dust, by straying from the path foreseen by mechanics, should show the slightest trace of spontaneity. The doctrine of final causes, on the contrary, will never be definitely refuted. If one form of it be put aside, it will take another. Its principle, which is essentially psychological, is very flexible. It is so extensible, and thereby so comprehensive, that one accepts something of it as soon as one rejects pure mechanism. The theory we shall put forward . . . will therefore necessarily partake of finalism to a certain extent.²⁵

Radical as our own theory may appear, finality is external or it is nothing at all.

²⁴ Cf. *Creative Evolution*. English translation, Introduction, p. xiv.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

Consider the most complex and the most harmonious organism. All the elements, we are told, conspire for the greatest good of the whole. Very well, but let us not forget that each of the elements may itself be an organism in certain cases, and that in subordinating the existence of this small organism to the life of the great one we accept the principle of an *external* finality. The idea of a finality that is *always* internal is, therefore, a self-destructive notion.²⁸

Such is the philosophy of life to which we are leading up. It claims to transcend both mechanism and finalism; but, as we announced at the beginning, it is nearer the second doctrine than the first. . . . Like radical finalism, although in a vaguer form, our philosophy represents the organized world as a harmonious whole. But this harmony is far from being as perfect as it has been claimed to be. . . . Harmony, therefore, does not exist in fact; it exists rather in principle; I mean that the original impetus is a *common* impetus, and the higher we ascend the stream of life the more do diverse tendencies appear complementary to each other. . . . It would be futile to try to assign to life an end, in the human sense of the word. To speak of an end is to think of a pre-existing model which has only to be realized. It is to suppose, therefore, that all is given, and that the future can be read in the present. It is to believe that life, in its movement and in its entirety, goes to work like our

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

intellect, which is only a motionless and fragmentary view of life, and which naturally takes its stand outside of time. Life, on the contrary, progresses and *endures* in time. Of course, when once the road has been traveled, we can glance over it, mark its direction, note this in psychological terms, and speak as if there had been pursuit of an end.²⁷

These quotations are, I think, fairly representative of Bergson's position in this matter. Regarding that position Corrance makes the following comment:²⁸

It has been said that Bergson's view of freedom destroys the belief in all finalism whatever. This is not so. It is true that his view does preclude any finalist scheme which is an absolute forecast of results. . . . His system as a whole is far more a vivid and original apologetic for theism than a criticism of the grounds on which it has previously been maintained. . . . The popular mind contains all the elements of philosophy *in confuso*, as is necessarily the case considering that the great realities of experience, which is the only sure ground of philosophy, are the same for all. Therefore, it contains and recognizes the element of change as well as abidingness. There can be little doubt, however, that the

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

²⁸ H. C. Corrance, "Bergson's Philosophy and the Idea of God," *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1914.

latter tendency has been exaggerated through Platonic and Christian idealism sinking down, in the course of many generations, into the general consciousness by means of popular teaching and hymns. . . . Besides, it has been identified with the moral ideals of Christianity, with all that is implied by religious and moral sentiment, which gives it great strength and prestige. . . .

Yet, the strong, instinctive desire in mankind for stability and permanence must have some cause and seek some satisfaction. Surely this will be found, if Bergson's contentions are right, no longer in static concepts, but in the deep and abiding sense of the identity and permanence of personality.

Bergson speaks of "tendency" in life, and even of "intention." The Vital Impetus is described as seeming to have the "intention" of developing spiritual life, personality, man. Bergson tells us that we can at least fathom this tendency, or intention, as far as it has already gone. It has been beyond the scope of his work, hitherto, to discuss such things in detail. He expects to do so in time. When he does, he will doubtless use not only biology, but also history in all of its phases. From the varied past of nature and of man he will probably form an estimate of the *character* of the

great, primal Force—that is, of God. This estimate could then form a basis for a forecast regarding the probable future, a future consistent with the character of such a Force, such a God. That future could not be known in detail, but its general nature and trend might be forecasted from the past so that faith, in adjusting itself to the character of God, could adjust itself definitely to the future as well, carrying action with it. The future would not be inconsistent with the past, but still would differ from it. As a matter of fact, is not this exactly what we are now obliged to do, whatever our theory?

In other words, God might be subject to growth and change and still be the ground of stability and permanence. He might *change* without being *changeable*. There would still be, in spite of change and growth, a permanence and identity of personality and of character which could attract the faith and trust of the religious worshiper without necessarily involving the postulates of omniscience and omnipotence. As Lyman Abbott says, ²⁹

²⁹ Lyman Abbott, "Bergson, the Philosopher of Progress," *The Outlook*, February 22, 1913.

Identity of personality and stability of character do not mean unchangeability. God *has* not created the world. He *is* creating it. What is the End? There is no end. "Eternal Life," "Everlasting Life," mean eternal growth. Against Bergson are scientific and theological fatalism. The latter assumes that God once formed a completed plan of life. Both agree in a *thing* which creates and things which are created. This creating *thing* is not a living God.

According to this view, then, there is a sense in which God may be thought of as changing and growing, and yet remaining "the same yesterday, today, and forever." As Muirhead remarks:³⁰

There is unity of direction in the creative impulse, even if no definable end. He (Bergson) insists on the inexhaustibleness and, with it, the unsearchableness of the riches of creative life; but this is not lack of intelligible direction, much less essential vacillation or ambiguity.

Therefore, in spite of a hesitancy which, indeed, may be due to the unearned increment of mere custom, we may safely conclude that Bergson's philosophy is generally compatible

³⁰ Muirhead, in the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911.

with theism; that it avoids some of the religious dilemmas favored by other systems; that it has some distinct advantages of its own in relation to religion.

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But one naturally raises the question: Is Bergsonism compatible with Christian theism? The important point here is, whether any limitation of knowledge and power in God would be compatible with the Christian idea of God. And by the Christian idea of God I mean that idea which emerges, crystal clear, from the teaching of Christ himself; not the more metaphysical idea elaborated by the Church in her historic creeds.

An adequate discussion of this matter would have to consider carefully the content of Jesus' special name for God—"Father." It is easy to see its chief meanings, however. It emphasizes love, and yet a love which involves the sternness, hardness, and suffering inescapable in the practice of righteousness. It emphasizes, too, the nearness of God and the directness of His spiritual relationship with man. The "Father" has a purpose and a plan which Jesus describes under the title, "The

Kingdom of Heaven." A noteworthy feature of Jesus' references to the Kingdom is a reserve regarding details, when it is a question of future developments. "No one knoweth," is his caution to his interlocutors. Those notable sections of Jesus' reported teaching regarding the future, in which we do find no little detail, are seriously open to question regarding their genuineness, at least as they now stand. They seem to contradict his teaching and practice elsewhere and are also the very phase of his teaching whose report would most easily be affected by current ideas among the early Christians in the direction of Jewish eschatology. But let us allow these teachings to stand as they are. Even so they do not vitally affect the main issue. Certainly, according to Jesus, the main thing is not the knowledge of, or even the existence of, a fully detailed plan for the future. His thought is mostly busy elsewhere. Consequently we do not find a predominant emphasis in Jesus' teaching upon the omniscience and omnipotence of God. To be sure, he says that "the Father knoweth," but, this statement to the contrary, it is fair to say that, in Jesus' teach-

ing, the certainty of the future of "the Kingdom" is grounded in the character of the "Father." Undoubtedly he did accept and teach an omnipotence and omniscience of God, as for instance, where he says, "With God all things are possible." This fact, however, does not settle our present question, which is primarily metaphysical. Apart from the diverse content of the terms, then and now, any such dogma in Jesus' teaching would be religious rather than metaphysical. Indeed I see no reason why a Bergsonian also could not consistently express himself *religiously* in the language of omniscience and omnipotence.

The decision in this matter depends, naturally, upon one's view of the essence of Christianity, and particularly upon one's conception of Christ. If we accept the foregoing sketch of Christian teaching, I do not see that we shall find essential incompatibility between it and an idea of God based upon Bergson's conception of the Vital Impetus. I do not contend that Bergson is right. Nor do I say that his philosophical position is more favorable to religion than other

philosophical systems are. The main point that we have been seeking to determine is, whether Bergson's doctrine of evolution is compatible with religion, with theism in general. We have decided that it is so. In addition, I venture the opinion that it is also compatible with Christian theism; though not compatible, of course, with all that goes under the name of Christian theism.

Perhaps the best test would be to hold in mind, as vividly as possible, a conception of God which conforms to the Bergsonian position. Then repeat slowly the petitions of the "Lord's Prayer," and note whether there arises any feeling of incongruity between the petitions of the prayer and the character of God so conceived. In order to make the test more clear and concrete, I shall reproduce here the words of the familiar prayer.³¹

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
As in heaven, so on earth.

³¹ Cf. Matt. 6:9-15. American Revised Version. Cf. also Luke 11:2-4. I have given the more inclusive form of the prayer, which is the one most commonly used.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
And bring us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one,
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
And the glory. Amen.

Try sincerely to enter into the original meaning and spirit of this sublime prayer, a difficult task even for one who may fortunately combine a devout spirit with deep historical appreciation; then place the impression alongside the Bergsonian conception of God. I do not think that a feeling of incongruity will necessarily arise. If such a feeling does not arise, the conclusion follows that a Bergsonian may consistently be not only a theist but also a Christian theist. Do not mistake my meaning. Bergson does not present us with a theistic position, much less with a Christian position. The contention is merely that he gives to those who may wish it a philosophical basis which is compatible with theism; and with Christianity also, at least as regards the point now under consideration.

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Bergson's conception of evolution has, in my judgment, a peculiarly helpful suggestiveness when brought into connection with the idea of development in religion, and with the problems of comparative religion. It is not philosophy and academic historical study alone which have banished from informed minds the thought of a mutual and complete exclusiveness between religions. The direct experience of the progressive missionary, whose sympathy and practical aims have led him to open his own eyes and those of others as well, supports in the strongest fashion the contention that there is a "family of religions." But, of course, problems have thereby been multiplied. What do we now mean by "revelation" and "salvation"? What should be the goal of our missionary work, the claims of essential Christianity upon our plans for propaganda? What right have we to hold to any essential distinction between "revealed" Hebraism-Christianity and unrevealed "heathenism"? Even if one religion is not "as good as another," is there not such a thing as religious comity by which the value and legitimacy of each religion in its own habitat may be recog-

nized and respected, even to the extent of non-interference and the abandonment of all missionary work? Will not a God worthy the name know and call His own in His own way? These questions are pressed upon us insistently today. On both practical and theoretical grounds, they cry out for answer. Does Bergson give us any help?

Whatever may be said of other evolutionary systems, it cannot be said of the Bergsonian idea that it is unfavorable to practical religion or inconsistent with the facts of comparative religion now so well known. The Spencerian system, and others similar to it, tended to reduce religion and the development of religion to factors of a non-religious nature. The Hegelian philosophy pictured a fictitious development which overrode facts and ended by reducing religion to an idea. On the other hand, recall to mind Bergson's illustration of the process of evolution by means of his well-known sheaf figure, or again, by the figure of a succession of explosive shells. These illustrations indicate clearly the striking congruity between his theory and the facts of religious development. Let us follow up the shell figure

a little more in detail. In spite of its destructive associations it will serve us well. Out of the original Vital Impetus, the ground of all and itself a spiritual explosive, comes a burst of spiritual explosives each one of which, exploding in turn, produces a new group of bursting units; and so on, in an infinite series. Not all of these explosive units explode, and, for those which do not explode, further life, development, and usefulness are past. Others produce more numerous and more far-reaching results than their neighbors so that it is possible for us now, by tracing the history of the explosions, to determine that here rather than there, along this line of development rather than that, the greatest amount of the original propulsion has gone, producing in its train the greatest development, the greatest promise. By tracing any pair of explosive tracks one may discover similarities and differences. They differ in the amount of original explosive power and in the kind and amount of deflecting opposition they have had to meet in their respective environments. They agree in the *kind* of explosive even where the *amount* is very diverse; and they agree in having the

same origin. If one is not a mere dilettante, but is truly interested in determining the existence of the explosive power in question and in making practical use of it, common sense would dictate special attention to and primary use of the main explosive track.

Need I draw the moral or adorn the tale? There is truth in all religions which are alive; which still burst, even though languidly, with their inherited charge. All go back to the same original Source and in this fact they find whatever unity they may possess. It is, however, not only possible but, in the nature of things, very likely that a few lines of explosive energy will stand out—the great ethnic faiths—and, among these few, one which may be adjudged supreme—may we say, Christianity? The tolerant or, rather, the brotherly attitude necessitated by this recognition of kinship with other religions will not diminish the sense of superiority arising from greater accomplishment. Revelation is here rather than there, but it is not exclusively here and totally absent there. It is the more *versus* the less. The beginnings of salvation, also, may be made in one or another of the less vigorous lines of re-

ligious evolution, but progress towards complete salvation, however that may be conceived, must follow the main trail—shall we say the trail blazed by Christian explosives? Is not this a basis good enough for a lifetime of missionary work? It does not predict the future in detail, and thus it makes large drafts upon our faith; but religion is supposed to do that, is it not?

Here again we meet the bogey of future uncertainty. As if we did not meet it everywhere in life. Inability to foretell the future lies against religion no more than against any other human activity. A faith that there is a future, be it what it may in detail, is enough to satisfy one religion or another; a faith that the future is connected "in principle" with the present of what we call the Christian life, should be enough to satisfy the Christian. Indeed, the greatest prophets of the Hebrew-Christian development have always been comparatively reticent about the future. They speak much of the future, to be sure, but in general terms; they believe in the future, they work for it, they connect its life-to-be with the life of the present; but the details are either

vague or obscure, or they are left where they really belong, to the future itself. Jesus' controlling attitude in this respect is indicated by the words he himself spoke, referring to this very matter, "No man knoweth the day or the hour."

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Finally, a word should be added regarding the bearing of Bergson's conception of evolution upon the idea of the soul. Since the advent of the so-called "psychology without a soul," we have had so much trouble in believing that we had a soul at all that we have usually neglected the further possibilities of the case. Whether the soul grows and progresses, or remains static in the permanence of its original nature, is of minor consequence so long as we are fearful for, or doubtful of, its very existence. The recent vitalistic trend, and other similar tendencies, have had their effect, however, and what McDougall³² calls "animism" is again stoutly defended. McDougall means by "animism" belief in the existence within us of a "soul" which is not reducible to matter or to mechanism. He says—and

³² William McDougall, *Mind and Body*, London, 1911.

rightly, I think—that religion depends upon the truth of some form of this “animistic” position.

This is, in general, just the position which Bergson holds. For him the soul is a reality and cannot be reduced to terms of matter and motion. But what I wish to make clear at this point is that the “soul,” according to Bergson, shares in the creative evolution of which God is the center and source. The soul also creates. It grows. It is being made and remade continually. And yet it persists, it “endures,” and (probably) will endure beyond the existence of its bodily shell.³³

There are vital religious and ethical values in this doctrine of the soul. We are building our own souls all the time. Each one of us has a part in his own creation. Nothing is unimportant. While the mechanical views of certain psychologists, as well as the crude literalistic views of certain theologians, are untenable, it is still true in a very real sense that a man must give account for every

³³ The basic discussion on which these conclusions rest is to be found in Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, *passim*. Compare, for example, pp. 195-197 in the English translation. Cf. also, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 268-271.

thought, word, and deed; that none of them is essentially forgotten or lost; the "pure memory," the soul, the character, preserves them all. The development of the soul may, and therefore should, be fostered by a conscious and vital relationship between the individual and its source, namely, God—the religious relationship. The individual may and should feel himself at one with his Creator in the task of producing a "more abounding life," and in overcoming the obstacles which bar this, the only true progress. The task is one of overcoming the ever present tendency towards materiality and inertness, and includes war against outside foes as well as against the foes that reside within the house of the soul itself.

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Bergson's thorough-going idea of evolution cuts both ways. It contains religious and ethical values which are stimulating and vital. On the other hand, it cuts across some of the dominant religious conceptions of the past and present. There are those who will decide against the philosophy solely because of its drastic religious implicates. They should not be unwilling, however, to recognize its pos-

sible religious value for others. Even those who are convinced of the essential weakness of the philosophy in itself, will have to grant the possibility of maintaining a religious and even a Christian faith in accord with its postulates. Still others, religiously or philosophically discontented with existing systems, may find here a satisfying basis for their religious thought. At any rate, our final answer is that the Bergsonian theory of evolution is compatible with religion and with a Christian faith.

CHAPTER V

INTUITION AND THE PRIMACY OF SPIRIT

THE primacy of spiritual energy in the universe was not seriously questioned among men until the nineteenth century began to manifest a new emphasis in thought. To be sure, the daily behavior of man has always registered the close and inescapable connection existing between human life and material things. But in theory, at least, both the masses and the classes, a few notable exceptions apart, accepted as basic facts the superiority of the psychic over the material and the non-derivability of the inner life from any material cause. The existence of God as an independent spiritual reality; the real and distinct existence of the individual soul; the primacy, in the universe, of God and of the soul; these things were not fundamentally doubted by many.

The nineteenth century, however, was marked by the enthronement of law as its god; the law of the uniformity of nature, of the con-

servation of energy, of the indestructibility of matter, of evolution. Under the rigorous and vigorous pressure of a scientific ideal, enthusiastically held and unremittingly applied, everything could be explained. Everything *would* be explained when we knew enough. By "explanation" was meant the tracing out of proximate and remote causes in nature, or in history, these causes constituting the "determining" causes of the things thus supposed to be "explained."

The zeal and effectiveness with which this scientific determinism was taken up and applied exerted an immense influence upon philosophy, upon men's fundamental views of life. Widespread doubt and disbelief arose regarding the existence and worth of spiritual realities independent of and underivable from material elements. Champions of idealistic and of specifically religious views of life attempted to come to honorable and satisfactory terms with the new tendency, seeking to harmonize the situation by accepting a deterministic process, but interpreting it in an idealistic way.

Towards the end of the century, however, breaks began to appear in the iron ring of de-

terminism encircling human life. These breaks were caused by blows delivered from various angles and by different kinds of hammer-wielders. Among them were vitalistic biologists, pragmatic philosophers, and those psychologists who believed in and applied the doctrine of the subconscious self. The conviction grew that we must draw a clearer line of demarcation between organic and inorganic science; between the physical and the social sciences. It was seen with increasing clearness that determinism has its limits and that deterministic theories must be made to keep their place.

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The outstanding protagonist of this more recent viewpoint is assuredly Henri Bergson. He represents primarily just this spontaneous reaction against extreme scientific and philosophical intellectualism. Years ago he came to feel that the exaltation of determinism had, in opposition to many stubborn facts, reduced free-will to an illusion, and spiritual activity to a mere puppet-show.

This revulsion of feeling on Bergson's part was due largely to his biological studies.

He saw that, in the formation of philosophical systems, the physical and the mathematical sciences had always played the dominant rôle. His thesis, on the other hand, was that life would be better understood by approaching it through the sciences of life rather than through the sciences whose subject-matter is inorganic, or which rest on pure logic. Thus his philosophy, up to the present, rests upon biology and psychology rather than upon physics and mathematics as, for example, was the case with Kant. The result has been his exaltation of intuition, free-will, and the primacy of spiritual force.

As René Gillouin says:

Bergson holds that we live in the Absolute, whether by thought or by intuition. In its own domain, matter, science touches the Absolute. In its own domain, life, intuition touches the Absolute. Determinism is an excellent *method*, within certain limits. It has been extended beyond its proper limits and has been made ruinous by being set up as a fundamental doctrine. . . . Bergson ends with a gnosticism at once new and traditional—new in its means and methods, traditional in its ambitions, for the common ambition of philosophers has been to transcend the conditions of human life.

Bergson himself says:

The reasons that determine us are determining only when the act is accomplished—the creation and the free-will are in the process by which these reasons have become determining.¹

Strange as it may seem to the casual reader of Bergson, he has been charged with materialistic tendencies. These, of course, must be unconscious tendencies, for Bergson's own language is explicit enough. It is maintained that one center of this unconscious materialism is his theory of "pure perception." This is the theory by which, in picturing the building up of conscious life, he brings, or tries to bring, mind and matter together. It is held that the process Bergson here postulates leads straight to a materialistic explanation of mental phenomena.²

Bergson admits gladly the important part the material universe plays in the *development* of consciousness, but I can not see in his theory of "pure perception" any suspicious trace of a materialistic view of the *origin* of

¹ H. Bergson, in an article entitled, "Liberty," in *Reports of the French Philosophical Society*.

² Cf. Bergson's *Matter and Memory*.

consciousness. Besides this there are weighty considerations which fall on the other side of the balance.

Karl Bornhausen, who has given us one of the sanest and most illuminating of the many discussions brought forth by Bergson's philosophy, makes this charge clearly and explicitly.³ On religious grounds he is sympathetic with much that Bergson says, and yet he voices a warning which has to do with a concealed materialism.

Bornhausen says: "This philosophy is significant for the grounding of religion, for religion represents in a special way that phase of life which is accessible to intuition alone." He quotes Bergson's answer to a question put by Frédéric Charpin: "Religion is a simple, unique element of life, and will not disappear since it is more feeling than thinking, and its object in part resides within itself, as effect as much as cause." Again Bornhausen says: "His idea of intuition is of great significance for religion, but to make the life impulse the object of religion is to

³ Karl Bornhausen, "Die Philosophie H. Bergsons und ihre Bedeutung für den Religionsbegriff," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 1910.

kill religion. We must exercise great caution in the face of this philosophy lest we lose our individual superiority over nature, our freedom, and the subjectivity of our personal faith."

These statements contain a criticism best expressed in the phrase, "lest we lose our individual superiority over nature." Here I must remind my readers that we are not engaged in a critique of Bergson's philosophy. I take up this point merely because the fear Bornhausen here expresses is, as a matter of fact, a fear of materialism. If his fear is justified, he himself should modify the favorable estimate of Bergson's religious influence which he gives elsewhere in the same treatise. If this fear is justified, then, no matter what Bergson himself may say or think, his real emphasis is not upon the primacy in life of an original, spiritual Force; his ultimate influence will make against it.

I do not think the fear is justified. Is it true that "to make the life impulse the object of religion is to kill religion"? As a matter of fact, the god of every religionist is looked upon by him as the life impulse and is often

worshiped mainly as such. What Bornhausen probably means is, that Bergson makes the life impulse, *conceived of as physical*, the object of religion. If this were true, then the result would indeed be materialism, and the loss of any higher form of religion. But it is not true.

We must remember that Bergson's ideas are, as yet, only partially worked out—or, at least, only partially published. Thus far they have been grounded almost exclusively upon biological and psychological phenomena. The biological basis of *Creative Evolution* accounts for the physical emphasis so prominent in that book. The future works which are promised us will have to give greater attention to the sciences of *human* life, especially to the science of history. In estimating Bergson this situation must always be borne in mind.

But it can not be said that, even in his already published works, the Vital Impetus has been identified with a purely physical life impulse. Bergson tells us that he considers life possible on other planets and in other solar systems. This non-earthly life would

use chemical elements different from those utilized by us, and hence would differ in form from our known forms of life. He considers this inference a fair one because life depends upon the Vital Impetus; and not upon the chemical changes utilized. In fact, he says, life might dispense with organized bodies, properly so-called.⁴

These ideas convey a pronounced non-physical implication, but they do not completely prove my point. What does prove it is Bergson's repeated insistence that this life impetus, on which all these forms of life depend and from which they arise, is *psychical*. Let us put the matter in Bergson's own language: Supra-consciousness is at the origin of life. Man owes his superiority indeed to his superior brain, his powers of language, and his social system which stores effort as language stores thought; but all these are themselves only the external manifestations of an inner and spiritual achievement. They are the servants of the Vital Impetus, and the Vital Impetus is essentially

⁴ Cf. Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. English translation by Mitchell, pp. 255-257. Also Bergson's "Presidential Address" before the Society for Physical Research.

a spiritual force. The success of man is a spiritual success. In this sense, man is truly the end of evolution. That is, he alone achieves that freedom which is its goal. The real evolutionary process is a psychic process of which the evolution of organic forms is merely one result, although a very important result. It is as if a Superman, that is, a supernatural, cosmic Being, had sought to realize himself. Thus the destiny of human consciousness and of the human soul is not bound up with the destiny of cerebral matter.

This is Bergson's position. To identify his "Vital Impulse" with a purely physical principle is thus clearly a violation of plain fact. Whatever we may think of the theory, the theory itself is clear; at least in its main outlines. Mind and matter alike go back to one, great, original source which Bergson himself, over and over again, characterizes as spiritual and psychic.

We have from Bergson a number of interesting statements regarding belief in immortality, and they support our thesis in a very clear and emphatic way. I shall quote only two of these statements. He says:

If we can prove that the rôle of the brain is to fix the attention of the mind on matter and that by far the greater part of mental life is independent of the brain, then we have proved the likelihood of survival: and it is for those who do not believe it to prove that they are right, not for us to prove that they are wrong.⁵

On the other hand, when we see that consciousness, whilst being at once creation and choice, is also memory, that one of its essential functions is to accumulate and preserve the past, that very probably (I lack time to attempt the demonstration of this point) the brain is an instrument of forgetfulness as much as one of remembrance, and that in pure consciousness nothing of the past is lost, the whole life of a conscious personality being an indivisible continuity, are we not led to suppose that the effort continues *beyond*, and that in this passage of consciousness through matter (the passage which at the tunnel's exit gives distinct personalities) consciousness is tempered like steel, and tests itself by clearly constituting personalities and preparing them, by the very effort which each of them is called upon to make, for a higher form of existence?

If we admit that with man consciousness has finally left the tunnel, that everywhere else consciousness has remained imprisoned, that every other species corresponds to the arrest of something which in man succeeded in overcoming resistance and in expanding

⁵ Bergson, in *The Literary Digest*, March 1, 1913.

almost freely, thus displaying itself in true personalities capable of remembering all and willing all and controlling their past and their future, we shall have no repugnance in admitting that in man, though perhaps in man alone, consciousness pursues its path beyond this earthly life.⁶

Do these statements point in the direction of materialism or in the opposite direction?

Again, Bergson recognizes the practical dualism existing between mind and matter;⁷ between soul life and brute things. He also traces the presence of this dualism far back, almost, but not quite, to the very beginning of things. This dualism is early, but not ultimate. It resolves itself into an ultimate unity

⁶ Bergson, "Life and Consciousness," *The Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

⁷ I do not agree with those who hold that Bergson's theory of matter is somewhat Kantian. The categories of the intellect do not create phenomenal matter; matter exists independently of the intellect, but in a more fluid, less clear-cut form than that in which we ordinarily think of it. For practical reasons, according to Bergson, the intellect cuts out certain cross-sections of the actual material world, sharpens their outlines, and solidifies their content. These cross-sections are like cinematograph pictures, held fixed for observation and for practical manipulation. Matter itself overflows these intellectual pictures and is more fluid than they. Still, in comparison with the "*élan vital*," it is relatively fixed and tends continually towards greater inertness. This is the matter of which I am speaking.

in that both elements originally spring from one source; *and that source is psychic.*⁸

He is also reported to have said: ⁹

This source of life is undoubtedly spiritual. Is it personal? Probably. There are not sufficient data to answer this question. Professor Bergson is inclined to think it is. It seems to him that personality is in the very intention of the evolution of life, and that the human personality is just one mode in which this intention is realized. It is, therefore, he thinks, very probable that the spiritual source of life whence our personality springs should be personal itself. Of course, personal in a different way, without all those accidental traits which in our mind form part of personality and which are bound up

⁸ In view of recent theories of matter, I may be unwise in making the following observation. Also, I am not unmindful that ignorance of the "how" of a supposed fact does not necessarily damn the fact. But I must confess that I do not see how Bergson gets his matter out of this original, spiritual, psychic force. It is difficult to understand how the original jet of spiritual spray (to use Bergson's own figure) condensed into matter. Why did it not merely dry up or, perhaps, simply go on spraying? However, I wish to repeat that we are not attempting a criticism of the philosophy as such. Whether or not we understand his "how" or agree with his "what," Bergson resolves all into the original life impulse and characterizes that impulse as spiritual, psychic, conscious. In this regard, therefore, we see that the Bergsonian philosophy upholds the primacy of the spirit.

⁹ Louis Levine, "Interview with Bergson," *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

with the existence of the body. But personal in a larger sense of the term—a spiritual unity expressing itself in the creative process of evolution.

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But there is another point at which Bergson upholds the primacy of the spiritual quite as strongly as he does in accounting for the origin of evolutionary processes. That is, where he maintains the distinct existence of the soul of the individual. Mechanistic, deterministic science has driven all forms of spiritism or, as McDougall¹⁰ calls it, “animism,” into the out-of-the-way caves of human belief. The “psychology without a soul” has been almost triumphant, leaving us psychology but no soul. As McDougall says, this issue is crucial for religion. No soul, as a distinct spiritual entity, no religion.

It is Bergson’s theory of memory which comes under consideration here, for his doctrine of the reality of the soul’s existence is based upon this theory. Whatever we may think of it, the theory at least gives us further proof of Bergson’s insistence upon the fundamental primacy of the spiritual element in all

¹⁰ William McDougall, *Mind and Body*. Introduction.

life. Let us briefly sketch its essential features.¹¹

Perception and memory differ in nature and kind. The past is only idea; the present is ideo-motor. We know matter only in part, but we know it *directly*. Hence matter can not exercise powers different in kind from those we perceive; and hence it can not create consciousness. The only way to refute materialism is to show that matter is precisely what it appears to be, and hence the spiritual life of man is an independent reality. Memory is in principle a power absolutely independent of matter. The brain is the advancing point of past representations pushing into the future. Destroy the brain and these representations are not destroyed, but their action over matter is gone.

Bergson distinguishes three kinds of memory; "habit memory," which is largely physical, the result of motor reactions; "representative memory," which is conscious, and plays a large part in directing action; and "pure memory," which is really an unconscious psychic state. This last is really our "soul"

¹¹ Cf. Bergson's *Matter and Memory*.

and is what we often describe as our "character." It gathers up all that is significant in our past, like a rolling snowball, and is always present in all our decisions, whether we are conscious of it or not. That is why it is fair and useful to follow the common sense rule of "judging a man by little things." This "pure memory" or "the soul," as distinguished from what we often *call* "memory," is essentially independent of matter; is powerful over matter through the medium of brain and body; and will probably survive the body. Through it communication takes place between man and the Supra-Soul of the universe, for, as Bergson puts it,

Pure Memory: Spirit:: Perception: Matter.

According to Bergson, therefore, the soul of man is a reality. It is a towering citadel of spirituality. It is essentially independent of matter and superior to it. It is also distinct from the Supra-Consciousness, or Vital Impetus, as well as from other individual souls. In spite of the separateness of these lesser individualities from one another and from the Cosmic Soul—a separateness due probably

to the action of opposing forces—the Cosmic Soul is the ultimate source of all. Thus Bergson again sounds the note of the primacy of the spirit in no uncertain way. The individual soul *is*; it is not subject to matter or derived from it; it points back to a great, original, psychic origin.

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The phases of Bergsonian thought which we have been considering have evident religious and ethical value. W. Scott Palmer draws from them the following inferences:

Permeation, communication, the gift of the Spirit and the mutual giving of God and of men is the world's truth; all else is mere expediency for action. . . . There is no real isolation between the spirits of men or between God and man. . . . (The streams of life) come from God, they are of Him, though each has its personal owner. . . . God Himself is "closer to each than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." . . . But He is not immanent in the stream. He is transcendent to it and personally related with it.¹²

In various ways many other men are reaching similar conclusions based on Bergsonian

¹² W. Scott Palmer, "A Christian Study Aided by Bergson. Presence and Omnipresence," *Contemporary Review*.

data. Bergson himself has once or twice broken the silence he has usually maintained regarding religious topics. To Levine he expressed the opinion that "the individual can not be guided by social ethics alone (*i.e.*, utilitarianism) and the craving for religious experience will remain and probably grow stronger as time goes on. The religious feeling is the sense of not being alone in the world; the sense of a relationship between the individual and the spiritual source of life."¹³

Let me repeat. It is undeniable that the elements of Bergson's thought which we have been discussing are clearly compatible with religion; in so far, then, they are compatible with the Christian religion also. His conclusions not only lend themselves to a theistic interpretation of life, they almost force it upon one. Alongside of his tendency towards theism lies his marked emphasis upon the spiritual distinctness of the individual; upon the reality of the soul. It only remains to bring these two together—the spiritual fountain head and the individual will—and religion is assured. This might be done without violence,

¹³ Louis Levine, in the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

and without necessarily departing from a Bergsonian basis, even if there were no corresponding principle of connection in Bergson's system. There is such a principle, however, and it constitutes one of the most striking and important features of the whole philosophy—the principle of intuition.

But before we turn to this new phase of the subject, I wish to add a word regarding the ethical value of Bergson's doctrine of the soul. The soul, like human freedom, is to a large extent achieved. It is being built up bit by bit with every new development of the individual's life. Nothing essential is lost; and the soul is really the compounded spiritual result of this whole process. It begins almost as a bare capability, and it ends—where? We know not; but it may grow towards purer and purer spirit.

It is evident that the part played by individual choice, in this matter of soul-building, is very great. The stream of spirit life is there to be drawn on, but a vast, inert mass of matter is also present. Like the Vital Impetus itself, each individual must meet obstacle after obstacle. The quintessence of this fight is the

struggle for more soul; for soul-freedom over against mechanism and formalism. As "pure memory" is connected with "habit memory" through conscious "representative memory," so the soul is connected with the inert mass of dead matter through the inevitable activity of the present. A let-down—inertia, laziness, deliberate rejection of the higher—means the increased materialization of the soul; its diminution; its loss. Thus, in a sense, according to Bergson, one has a soul from the very beginning of life. In another sense, equally real, one must *acquire* his soul by active, idealistic effort. In every way the ethical appeal of this conception rivals in force the religious appeal already seen to be so powerful.

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As Bornhausen says, "Bergson's idea of intuition is of great significance for religion." In itself and through its natural consequences it is perhaps the most significant phase of Bergson's thought in the direction of religion. The discussion of this fundamental Bergsonian doctrine may well be prefaced by the words of Goethe, "Animated inquiry into cause does

infinite harm";¹⁴ and by Plato's characterization of metaphysics, "It can not be put into words as can other inquiries, but after long intercourse with the thing itself, and after it has been lived with, suddenly, as when fire leaps up and the light kindles, it is found in the soul and feeds itself there."¹⁵

According to Lindsay:

Plato and Bergson both insist that true knowledge must dispense with symbols—it is immediate apprehension, an act of the spirit. They differ in that Plato took the mathematical universal as the type of all universals and hence denied the reality of time and change. Kant and most modern thinkers concern themselves with applied science and for them the test of truth is not in its own apprehension, but in results, coherency, usefulness. Bergson follows Plato in this regard. In the sciences of life, the unpredictable individual compels a greater use of intuition and the subordination of the mathematical. But this does not mean giving up science and falling back on feeling. Intuition must supplement and not dispense with science. Metaphysics differs from science in that it attempts to apprehend reality for itself and not for any practical use. This requires the sympathy of long experience (*op. cit.*).

¹⁴ The quotation, as given, is from Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.

¹⁵ Cf. Plato's *Epistles*, VII: pp. 341, 344. Quoted by Lindsay in his *Philosophy of Bergson*.

And again,

Intuition is not a method practised by turning away from the sciences, but somehow by completing them. Bergson says, "If by mysticism be meant a reaction against positive science, the doctrine which I defend is in the end only a protest against mysticism" (*op. cit.*).

These quotations serve not only to silence those who accuse Bergson of anti-scientific bias, but also to indicate the true nature of intuition in the Bergsonian sense. He himself has illustrated it by means of the experience of an author who, after long study and investigation (scientific research), seeks to put himself at the heart of his subject by a supreme act of concentrated sympathy and imagination. Bergson also rightly points out the essential part played by intuition, thus understood, in the progress of science. In fact, all new discoveries, all progress, have been due to this gift. It is fruitful, however, only when it springs out of a wide and intimate knowledge of fact. Otherwise it is empty, barren, and purely emotional. Bergson's own words are: "Intuition and intellect do not oppose each other, save where intuition refuses to become

more precise by coming into touch with facts scientifically studied, and where intellect, instead of confining itself to science proper, combines with this an unconscious and inconsistent metaphysic which in vain lays claim to scientific pretensions." ¹⁶

All great philosophical systems have sprung out of great intuitions. Too often, however, their real source has been forgotten, and they have been explained solely on the basis of the intellectual elaborations necessary for the sake of presentation and defense. Thus, while Bergson maintains that dialectic is necessary to put intuition to the proof and to break it up into concepts for the sake of propagation, he also insists that intuition is more fundamental. It is really instinct become self-conscious. Instinct, as seen in the hymenoptera, prolongs the work of organic organization and is next to very life itself. Make this instinct conscious, that is, turn it into intuition, and we can think life. Otherwise not.

As Carr describes it:

Philosophy deals with life which undergoes real changes in time. If we had intellect alone, life would

¹⁶ Bergson, "Life and Consciousness," *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

be unknown and unknowable. We must install ourselves in the life process and use intuition instead of intellect. . . . This is not mysticism. It is based on fact and its philosophical analysis is interpretation of ordinary experience. According to Bergson, this intuitive faculty lies in the fringe of consciousness surrounding our intellect, which is limited to practical purposes.¹⁷

The method, therefore, by which alone we may get direct contact with the real of the whole, is the same as that by which we come into contact with fragments of reality in separate spheres of investigation. The method of the author with his subject, the scientist with his science, is the method to be followed by the man seeking the final reality of the universe. He can not neglect facts. His intellect must busy itself collating, analyzing, applying. Without this all would become empty emotionalism. But this alone will not lift a man above his bare facts. By intuition he must plunge into the stream of fact and "get the feel of it." This is not the blind instinct of the animal. The "feel" of the animal is vivid, but so limited as to be useless for any purpose like that now under consideration. It is man alone

¹⁷ H. W. Carr, in the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1910.

who, sharing instinct and intellect, can consciously apprehend a wide range of fact, and thus get a survey broad enough to enable him to formulate views regarding the final real. We have atrophied our gift of instinct by over-emphasis of intellect. We must now exalt the despised faculty without losing what intellect has gained for us.

Jacks asks:

Must the meaning of life always be expressed in words? Is it not often expressed by action? by being? We do not want a photograph of experience. We want our experience enlarged and deepened. But we need philosophy to expose false philosophies and to lay bare the ultimate fact. Its function is to enforce the attitude of meditation—not to capture reality, but to free it from captivity. Start with the notion that it is you who explain the object, and not the object which explains itself, and you are bound to end in explaining it away. It is one thing to discover fixity in experience, but another thing to confer fixity on experience by a form of words. Reality must be left to tell its own story in its own way.¹⁸

This, I take it, is truly Bergsonian. It is a sort of philosophic quietism, but, with Bergson, it is superimposed upon a very active and ar-

¹⁸ L. P. Jacks, *The Alchemy of Thought*.

duous intellectual task and in itself requires a herculean spiritual effort. One feels, in considering Bergson's theory of intuition, that fusion of realism and idealism which he claims to effect. It is not only real work, but a real object directly and actually apprehended. And yet, this is not accomplished "without idealism in the soul," as Bergson says, and the product is an ideal, a spiritual product. "To get a pure perception of reality, we must have a certain immateriality of life, *i.e.*, idealism. Realism is in the work when idealism is in the soul." ¹⁹

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It has already become evident that Bergson's teaching regarding intuition has points of contact with mysticism. Muirhead says, "Bergson has a practical emphasis, and yet the principle of spirit is a will to know—not by logic, to be sure, but by intuition. Here he is more in line with Plotinus and the gnostics than with the pragmatists." ²⁰ Slosson points out that the study of Bergson has turned his

¹⁹ Quoted from Bergson by E. E. Slosson in his "Prophets of Today—Bergson," *The Independent*, June 8, 1911.

²⁰ Muirhead's review of Bergson's work in the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911.

modernist Catholic admirers to a study of the saints of mysticism. Mories remarks: "However we may name the eternal principle of the universe, we ourselves (according to Bergson) are part and parcel of it and, therefore, in most direct contact with it. This is against all 'relativism,' and is full of constructive promise for religion. The whole trend of recent thought has been toward an attitude more fundamental than formal religion, that is towards mysticism. Lay the spirit open. . . . Bergson gives an exposition of the empirical, psychological basis of ecstasy."²¹ To quote Macintosh: "Bergson is especially sympathetic with religious mysticism. Bergson says, 'The true metaphysic will be an immediate vision of reality and the mystical experience is certainly that.'"²²

Listen to Bergson's own words as reported by Levine:²³

"Is it not remarkable," Bergson asked, "that the mystics throughout the ages, without knowing one

²¹ A. S. Mories, "Bergson and Mysticism," *Westminster Review*, June, 1912.

²² Macintosh, "Bergson and Religion," *Biblical World*, January, 1913.

²³ Levine's interview in the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

another, came to such similar conclusions merely on the basis of their inner experience? Now what the mystics tell us about themselves is extremely interesting and of great value for the understanding of the life of the spirit. It is ridiculous to dismiss all this with a shrug of the shoulders, as so many are inclined to do in our so-called positive age. On the contrary, their clue should be taken up and followed, and the chances are that the deeper we plunge into our inner experience, the greater the treasures we shall discover there."

There is a mystic element in all religion. In fact, the religious act itself is essentially mystical. This naturally appears more markedly in those of an emotional temperament than in those of the practical or of the intellectual type. But it is present with these also, even if under cover, provided real religion is there. If this be granted, it is also evident that a philosophy which, by common consent, leans strongly towards mysticism, must be not merely compatible with religion, but also highly favorable to it in this respect at least.

Such is the case with M. Bergson's philosophy. The way in which the individual soul, according to Bergson, grasps the Ultimate (the Vital Impulse), is the very way by which

the same soul seeks and finds its religious goal—God. “Oh! that I knew where I might find Him!” “Lift up your eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth.” “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” “He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but *they that wait for Jehovah* shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Faith, defined in a way compatible with the Bergsonian position, could be no formal thing, no merely intellectual proposition. It would be an act, or rather an attitude, of the whole life, by which the soul would become fused with its spiritual source and Creator, though remaining consciously distinct from that source. The good element of pantheism would thus be preserved, in that the all-pervasiveness of divine life would be recognized; but the harm-

ful identification of God with nature *in toto* would be cast aside.

"I am the vine. Ye are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing." Applying these words to the relationship between man and God, a religious Bergsonian could honestly repeat them; in fact they would express his position completely. The filial relationship between man and God, pictured by Jesus in his teaching, is one of trust and communion as between son and father; this teaching is thoroughly compatible with Bergson's doctrine. Paul's mystical nature is well known and his conception of faith is exactly this mystical fusion between the believer and his object of worship.

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But many will grant all this and yet mistrust Bergson and his religious influence *just because* of this pronounced mystical emphasis. These critics would point out the weaknesses of religious mysticism—its vagaries; its self-centeredness; its flight from the world; its unethical or even anti-ethical tendencies. This objection is similar to that

leveled at Bergson's supposed anti-scientific trend. According to that criticism, his doctrine of intuition is opposed to intellect and to all science. According to this criticism, the effect of Bergson's influence will be an unfortunate obscurantism; a return to a riot of mystical raptures which will be harmful to religion in the long run, because unbalanced and possibly anti-ethical.

I have already indicated, somewhat at length, how groundless these extreme charges are. Doubtless those who make them divine correctly a tendency in Bergsonism which should be watched and controlled. But Bergson himself is keenly alive to this need. His repeated emphasis upon the necessity of scientific investigation is supported by his own extended labors in the scientific field. His whole philosophy rests upon the basis of carefully investigated scientific fact. He knows that the "inner light" is often deceitful above all things, and he is insistent that intuitions shall spring out of fact and not out of abnormal imagination merely. These intuitions, also, must be tested and verified by long and arduous scientific application to things as they are. While on his

lecture tour in the United States, "he said most explicitly that, notwithstanding his high valuation of intuition, he thought it should always be tested by verification; regarding intuition as a valuable guide-board, but one that, like other guide-boards, might prove wrong."²⁴

Over-subjectivism in religion would not be an inescapable corollary of Bergsonism. History would necessarily have an important place in any truly Bergsonian religious viewpoint. The way by which Bergson himself arrived at his "intuition" of creative evolution was the way of natural history. As Loveday says, "The original Impulse may be understood by taking a synoptic view of its actual developments. The complete interpretation of ultimate reality presupposes a complete natural history and Bergson does not pretend to do more than sketch the general outlines of the scheme."²⁵

For these reasons we are safe in predicting that Bergson's promised discussion of religion,

²⁴ I am indebted to Mr. Henry Holt for this particular statement, which Bergson made to him personally. Compare also Mr. Holt's book, *On the Cosmic Relations*, Vol. I, page 454.

²⁵ T. Loveday, "Evolution Creatrice," in *Mind*.

when it comes, will be largely historical. The faith he will at least allow, and will probably plead for, will not be a mystic faith of a purely subjective kind; but a mystic union with an object of worship increasingly made clear in the development of human history. The Bergsonian mystic would and should have a scientific filling for his mysticism. His mystic intuition, or faith, must spring out of facts and be tested carefully by them.

Against this sort of mysticism there is no valid objection. In fact, it is just this element we now so sorely lack and need. It is the only thing which can enliven the soberness and soften the hardness of those who are too exclusively intellectual, or too predominately practical. Besides, mysticism has always been an antidote for legalistic and absolutistic stagnation. The reaction against it has resulted in part from the lack of balance of the old-style mystics. This reaction has cut off some from the Church, and others from religion itself. For still others it has diminished the real solace and stimulus derived from their professed faith. Bergson's philosophy smoothes the way for a revival of mysticism in religion, but, if his own

method be sincerely followed, it will be a controlled mysticism whose subjective ecstasy will be directed, modified, and restrained by objective considerations of a scientific and historical nature.

In addition, it is gratuitous to assume that this Bergsonian religion will necessarily be predominatingly theological and correspondingly non-ethical or anti-ethical. Just how Bergson will ground his ethical system can not now be said with certainty. We may safely assert, however, that a Bergsonian ethic will be forthcoming; that the nature of his thought excludes the probability that this ethic may be fundamentally utilitarian; finally, that it is impossible to conceive how this ethic can escape a certain degree of fusion with religion, especially in the development of the religious idea.

There is room in the Bergsonian view for the "categorical imperative." The Vital Impulse is under the necessity of propagating itself. Nay more, being psychic and conscious, this necessity gives rise to a feeling of oughtness, for "ought" is the psychic counterpart of the more physical "must." According to

Bergson, the Vital Impetus can not help expanding and extending its influence. It is also a *growing* thing, not static, finished, complete. Therefore, Bergson holds, it is compelled by inner necessity to reach out for more; towards a larger and a fuller life for itself. Since the Vital Impulse is also, at the same time, psychic and conscious; and since "ought" is the psychic counterpart of the physical "must," may we not conclude that the Vital Impulse, this Cosmic Soul, has necessarily a fundamental feeling of oughtness in two definite directions: first, in the direction of self-propagation and, second, in the direction of self-development?

Now the individual soul, according to Bergson, is made of the same cosmic stuff; and, therefore, we may conclude that it shares the compulsions of this same inner imperative. The individual, *qua* individual, knows that he *ought* to maintain and to increase his own spiritual life; he knows also that he *ought* to maintain and to increase spiritual life as such, in others as well as in himself. Thus room is made for a social ethic, and one is reminded of Kant's pronouncement that the test of good-

ness is the possibility of its universal application.

This formal principle of oughtness, according to Bergsonian teaching, would have to receive its vital, concrete content from experience; not the experience of the individual, merely, but of the race as well, that is, from history. Kant said: "The only good thing in the world is a good will." But what is a *good* will, ultimately? Bergson would say, "The will which seeks to maintain and to increase the Vital Impetus in its work of freedom and spirituality." Then, just as history—the experience of the individual and of the race—is showing us what the nature of the Vital Impetus is, so history (in the same sense) must show us what concrete relations must be set up in order to realize this good will and make it effective. In other words, the conscience can and must be educated through the knowledge and consideration of concrete fact. The resulting concrete relations will constitute positive Bergsonian morality, the ground of whose goodness is the Vital Impetus itself. The Bergsonian religionist, therefore, who identifies his God with the Vital Impetus can not

separate his religion from his ethics without being inconsistent and without doing serious damage to both.

In conclusion, then, I take it that they alarm themselves unnecessarily who imagine that the Bergsonian trend towards religion, through emphasis on intuition and the primacy of the spirit, is likely to prove unethical or anti-ethical. While this trend is not inescapably Christian, on either its religious or its ethical side, it is not inevitably non-Christian. Indeed, as far as the phases here discussed are concerned, Bergsonism is not only compatible with Christianity, but even favorable towards it.

CHAPTER VI

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

IF we were inescapably shut up to a belief in the freedom of the will, we should be irrevocably shut out from freedom itself and from the possibility of establishing our belief on rational grounds. But we are not thus obliged to believe in it even though the full tide of human hope, judgment, and action sets that way. Indeed, once the idea is suggested to us that we are not free; that in some subtle way, known only to materialistic philosophers or to physiological psychologists, our thoughts, purposes, ideals, and affections are only sparks which fly where the wheels of matter grind together in the brain; we become tormented by the thought. And there is much in life that supports the latter theory and confirms our fears. Perhaps our sense of freedom, and with it our sense of duty, responsibility, and personal value, are illusions; at any rate we will

cling to our illusions for they are sweet. We shall be none the worse off at the end, and in the meantime we may be cheered by them, except in the bad quarter-hours when we can not keep our eyes shut. At the end, when the ship goes down, we will stand at attention, fly the colors, play the band, sing the anthem, and die like men.

Such is the brave resolve of many victims of the Great Disillusionment. But most of us are not disillusioned; at least not so thoroughly as to make of despair a conscious and confirmed theory. We believe still. In fact, among the mass of us, in whom the surge of life runs strong, whose springs have not yet been choked up by the sands of a timorous speculation,—among the mass of us, I say, there is still a supreme confidence in freedom. The popular idea is that one is completely the “captain of his soul.” May I not do as I please? Am I not free, absolutely free, to contract habits or to break them off? It is only the submerged minority that cannot “stop at any time.” Who does not feel within himself the capability of at least a small amount of new and original endeavor? The conventions

of life bind one, of course, but only because one willingly accepts them. He knows they are often foolish, but they save time and trouble and, on the whole, make for harmony and efficiency of life. If they become unduly oppressive, a burden instead of a crutch, then one can easily shatter them to bits. In fact, who does not occasionally do so? So the average believer in freedom.

On the other hand, one of the commonest facts of life, at every level, is a frank recognition of the power of habit, custom, "circumstances." Wrong-doing is excused or explained by "circumstances," birth, upbringing, environment. "Outside compulsion" is the ready excuse of those who have something to explain away. The poor as well as the rich recognize and observe distinctions of birth and circumstance and usually condemn marriage out of one's rank, whether it be "marrying up" or "marrying down." Nature is universally recognized as setting fixed limits to the effort and ambition of man, and the significance of so-called "acts of God" is not lost, even on the least intelligent. To the great mass of men, who necessarily live from hand

to mouth, death comes even closer than to those of larger means; and the impartiality of its activity as well as the inevitableness and far-reaching nature of its effects, direct and indirect, are fully realized. Such are the facts which sober, if they do not crush, belief in freedom.

An unusual experience of facts like these, whether in one's personal life or through wide observation of the poor and unfortunate, often tends to offset the natural belief in freedom and to establish the conviction that there is no such thing. This conviction speedily finds theoretical support in the conclusions of deterministic science, spread abroad in a form that is popular, but often very crude and objectionable. Besides, the scientists themselves act and talk (indeed, as *scientists*, they have to) as if all were absolutely determined; and a large proportion of them are convinced that determinism is not merely a working hypothesis, of practical value and possibly of limited validity, but a fact of universal applicability. It is not strange that, under these circumstances, many have adopted the view that there is no such thing as *meta-physics*; no spirit-life,

no freedom, no real responsibility; nothing but an all-embracing determinism.

Many do not know, or they lose sight of, the limits and the assumptions of science; and the hard knocks of experience have driven under their ability to appreciate the validity and significance of those other experiences whence arises faith in one's self, in spirit, freedom, God. They do not know, in the first place, that the claims of determinists are met by counter-claims which challenge certain scientific assumptions, at least in so far as they are dogmatically asserted to be universally binding. Let me give one of these challenges by way of illustration. It is now frequently maintained that "the reality which we *call* physical reality, and which we ordinarily mean when we speak of reality, is not the physical reality of life but the *schematic* reality of *things*. So when we say there are no *things*, there are only actions, we are denying the ultimate nature of that form of reality with which physical science deals. We are declaring that it is derived and not original. The necessity on account of which it exists, the purpose it serves, is the activity that constitutes our life, but it is not

itself the reality of that life. The mode of our activity is intellectual, and the work of the intellect is to form for us a scheme or diagram against which to present the world as a sphere of our activity and to enable us to have a grasp or hold upon it. Physical science is the apprehension of reality in a schematical form. We have come then to the essential meaning of the principle that living action not scientific knowledge is the key to the solution of metaphysical problems.”¹

Furthermore, the average man, carried away by the cheap determinism of a crude, popularized science, forgets also that there is no proof that “the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile”; that, in fact, there are weighty reasons against it. Carr says:²

There are two reasons that must make it seem to every one who studies the problem impossible to suppose that the brain can produce the mind in any way that is analogous to the secretion of a gland or the functioning of an organ. One reason concerns the nature of scientific explanation, the other the content

¹ H. Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, London, 1914, pp. 130-1. I have taken the liberty of italicizing certain words in order to bring out the meaning a little more clearly.

² Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 52.

of consciousness. The first reason is that it is impossible to explain anything as a consequence or effect of another thing unless there is some common measure that we can apply to each, and there is no common measure that we can apply to mind and brain. And the other reason is that the consciousness which arises in connection with cerebral process is not consciousness of the cerebral process but of something which is independent of it, something existing in a different part of space, it may be thousands of miles away from the brain, and something existing at a different time, it may be ages before or even after the moment in which the accompanying cerebral process is taking place. . . .

These two reasons are, as I have said, unanswerable. The first may be summed up by saying that the chain of causes and effects in the physiological process of which the brain is the centre is complete without the intervention of the psychical process, while the psychical process of consciousness, though a connected series of events, is not a relation of effects to causes but an association of ideas which involves no conversion of physical energy. And the second may be summed up by saying that knowledge, if it is knowledge of what is outside the brain, cannot be manufactured by a process inside the brain.

Besides failing to appreciate the objections to a thorough-going scientific determinism, those who have given up their faith in freedom

often forget, or fail to cultivate, those phases of life which mean most to us but which lose all value if pressed into a deterministic mold. The sense of duty is fundamentally a faith,³ but a faith without which life would be impossible. This faith requires an ideal, or object of faith, objectively existent, for "one cannot hang a coat on the *idea* of a peg." Real life, too, is proportionate to the love which this ideal, this object of faith, engenders in the heart. These are the things men live by, and failure to live by them cuts us off from the laboratory where alone we may test competing theories of life. Now scientific determinism is not controlling in the sphere of these realities and, in fact, if it exceeds its proper limits in this direction, it becomes a destroyer of the highest things in life.

It is natural, therefore, that those who are most keenly interested in these things should hold most strongly to belief in freedom. Consequently, we are not surprised to find religious people shouting the praises of freedom, in this connection at least, and eyeing with suspicion

³ Émile Boutroux, *Science et Religion*, cf. the final chapter, whence I have taken the thought of this part of the paragraph.

a science whose tendency has hitherto been predominantly deterministic. With Paul they cry, "But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. . . . Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the free woman. For freedom did Christ set us free." ⁴ And yet, religious believers have often held views quite inconsistent with a belief in real freedom. There have been, and still are, religions and religious sects in which freedom is either explicitly or implicitly denied. In the naturalistic religions of primitive times, in Islam, in Calvinism, necessity and determinism supplant freedom. But, in order to progress in accordance with the demands of other principles also strongly held, the principle of freedom has had to be admitted in some form or other. In fact, no genuinely religious system can deny it altogether.

The fact that Bergson is on the side of free will is, in so far, a promise that he is also on the side of religion. In *Time and Free Will* he pleads ably for the fact of freedom. As Carr says,⁵

⁴ Galatians iv: 26, 31. v: 1.

⁵ Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196.

What then is the attraction that this philosophy exercises? What is there of supreme value that it assures us? The answer is freedom.

It does not seem so. Our whole life is regulated by automatisms. The life-process from beginning to end seems to be the formation of habits, and habits are only broken by new habits. Wherever we look, whether at the constant supply of daily needs or at the higher generalizations of science and philosophy, all advance seems dependent on regular orderly obedience to rule, all seems part of a universal determinism. Our philosophy shows us the ground of this determinism in the intellectual nature of our activity, and at the same time reveals to us in the intuition of life the underlying reality of an essentially free activity. The very essence of life is unceasing creation, and our human form seems to register the greatest freedom that life has secured under the limitations of its existence.

Bergson himself says: *

We can now formulate our conception of freedom. Freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act which it performs. This relation is indefinable, just because we *are* free. For we can analyze a thing, but not a process; we can break up extensity, but not duration. . . . Thus, any positive definition of freedom will ensure the victory of determinism. . .

* Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. English translation by Pogson, pp. 219, 220, 221.

To sum up; every demand for explanation in regard to freedom comes back, without our suspecting it, to the following question: "Can time be adequately represented by space?" To which we answer: Yes, if you are dealing with time flown; No, if you speak of time flowing. Now, the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not in time which has already flown. Freedom is therefore a fact, and among the facts which we observe there is none clearer.

Bergson's strong assertion of the fact of freedom has led to much misunderstanding of his position. He does not conceive of freedom as without limits. Far from it. He says:⁷

. . . the outward manifestation of this inner state will be just what is called a free act, since the self alone will have been the author of it, and since it will express the whole of the self. Freedom, thus understood, is not *absolute*, as a radical libertarian philosophy would have it; it admits of degrees. . .

. . . Here will be found, within the fundamental self, a parasitic self which continually encroaches upon the other. Many live this kind of a life, and die without having known true freedom.

And again:⁸

Hence there are finally two different selves, one of

⁷ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

⁸ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-232.

which is, as it were, the external projection of the other, its spatial and, so to speak, social representation. We reach the former by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another and of which the succession in duration has nothing in common with juxtaposition in homogeneous space. But the moments at which we thus grasp ourselves are rare, and that is just why we are rarely free. The greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colorless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space. Hence our life unfolds in space rather than in time; we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we "are acted" rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to recover possession of one's self, and to get back into pure duration.

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We see, therefore, that Bergsonian freedom is far from mere license and that it is represented as having, in actual life, very definite and extensive limitations. But let us now present the doctrine in a more complete fashion: Bergson holds that the difficulty we have in preserving our naïve belief in human freedom lies in the tendency we have acquired, in the

development of our intellectual life, of carrying over into our picture of mental life a conception of time which is applicable only in the realm of physical science, that is, to the inert. According to this conception, time is a quantitative thing, a *succession of moments* which are distinct from one another. But the time of the inner life, for which Bergson prefers the word "duration," is not a succession of separate moments, quantitatively measured, but an interpenetration of qualitative states which become indivisibly fused in the actual life of the mind. The quantitative time of our ordinary thought is indeed merely mathematical, a symbol of the reality not the reality itself, and results from the practical needs of science and of our everyday life, in the task of handling and of overcoming physical nature.

He says: *

An inner life with well distinguished moments and with clearly characterized states will answer better the requirements of social life. Indeed, a superficial psychology may be content with describing it without thereby falling into error, on condition, however, that it restricts itself to the study of what has taken

* Bergson, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

place and leaves out what is going on. But if, passing from statics to dynamics, this psychology claims to reason about things in the making as it reasons about things made, if it offers us the concrete and living self as an association of terms which are distinct from one another and are set side by side in a homogeneous medium, it will see difficulty after difficulty rising in its path. And these difficulties will multiply the greater the efforts it makes to overcome them, for all its efforts will only bring into clearer light the absurdity of the fundamental hypothesis by which it spreads out time in space and puts succession at the very center of simultaneity. We shall see that the contradictions implied in the problems of causality, freedom, personality, spring from no other source, and that, if we wish to get rid of them, we have only to go back to the real and concrete self and give up its symbolical substitute.

The wrong use of this physical, symbolical conception of time gives rise to a wrong application of the words "causality" and "determinism" to psychic phenomena. Bergson says:¹⁰

Nevertheless it will be worth while to dwell on this latter form of the determinist argument (namely, that "the action having once been performed, any other action is seen, under the given conditions, to

¹⁰ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.

have been impossible”), even though it be only to explain from our point of view the meaning of the two words “determinism” and “causality.”

In vain do we argue that there cannot be any question either of foreseeing a future action in the way that an astronomical phenomenon is foreseen, or of asserting, when once an action is done, that any other action would have been impossible under the given conditions. In vain do we add that, even when it takes this form: “The same causes produce the same effects,” the principle of universal determination loses every shred of meaning in the inner world of conscious states. The determinist will perhaps yield to our arguments on each of these points in particular, will admit that in the psychical field one cannot ascribe any of these three meanings to the word determination, will probably fail to discover a fourth meaning, and yet will go on repeating that the act is inseparably bound up with its antecedents. We thus find ourselves here confronted by so deep-seated a misapprehension and so obstinate a prejudice that we cannot get the better of them without attacking them at their root, which is the principle of causality.

Continuing, Bergson maintains ¹¹ that “causality, as ‘regular succession,’ does not apply to conscious states and cannot disprove free will”; that “causality, as the prefiguring of

¹¹ Bergson, *op. cit.*, cf. pp. 202-215.

the future phenomenon in its present conditions, in one form destroys concrete phenomena—it cannot bind the future to the present without neglecting duration”; that “the necessary determination of phenomena implies non-duration, but *we endure* and are therefore free”; and, finally, that “prefiguring, as having an idea of a future act which we cannot realize without effort does not involve necessary determination.”

He then concludes: ¹²

It follows from this two-fold analysis that the principle of causality involves two contradictory conceptions of duration, two mutually exclusive ways of prefiguring the future in the present. Sometimes all phenomena, physical or psychical, are pictured as *enduring* in the same way that *we* do: in this case the future will exist in the present only as an idea, and the passing from the present to the future will take the form of an effort which does not always lead to the realization of the idea conceived. Sometimes, on the other hand, duration is regarded as the characteristic form of *conscious* states; in this case, *things* are no longer supposed to *endure* as *we* do, and a mathematical pre-existence of their future in the present is admitted.

Now, each of these two hypotheses, when taken by

¹² Bergson, *op. cit.*, cf. pp. 215-216.

itself, safeguards human freedom; for the first would lead to the result that even the phenomena of nature were contingent, and the second, by attributing the necessary determination of physical phenomena to the fact that things do not *endure* as we do, invites us to regard the self which is subject to duration as a free force. Therefore, every clear conception of causality, where we know our own meaning, leads to the idea of human freedom as a natural consequence. Unfortunately, the habit has grown up of taking the principle of causality in both senses at the same time, because the one is more flattering to our imagination and the other is more favorable to mathematical reasoning.

Bergson points out that our immediate problem is merely one phase of a larger conflict between two rival systems of nature, mechanism and dynamism.

Dynamism starts from the idea of voluntary activity, given by consciousness, and comes to represent inertia by gradually emptying this idea: it has thus no difficulty in conceiving free force on the one hand and matter governed by laws on the other. Mechanism follows the opposite course. It assumes that the materials which it synthesizes are governed by necessary laws, and although it reaches richer and richer combinations, which are more and more difficult to foresee, and to all appearance more and more

contingent, yet it never gets out of the narrow circle of necessity within which it at first shut itself up.¹³

But neither side can rest content with a mere recognition of this fundamental difference in point of view. The apostle of freedom must establish his position through defense and attack, or it will be won from him. Bergson says:¹⁴

A posteriori, however, definite facts are appealed to against freedom, some physical, others psychological. Sometimes it is asserted that our actions are necessitated by our feelings, our ideas, and the whole preceding series of our conscious states; sometimes freedom is denounced as being incompatible with the fundamental properties of matter, and in particular with the principle of the conservation of energy. Hence two kinds of determinism, two apparently different proofs of universal necessity. We shall show that the second of these two forms is reducible to the first, and that all determinism, even physical determinism, involves a psychological hypothesis: we shall then prove that psychological determinism itself, and the refutations which are given of it, rest on an inaccurate conception of the multiplicity of conscious states, or rather of duration.

¹³ Bergson, *op. cit.*, p. 140 f.

¹⁴ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

Thus, in the light of the principles worked out in the foregoing chapter, we shall see a self emerge whose activity cannot be compared to that of any other force.

Bergson then proceeds to show¹⁵ that "if the principle of the conservation of energy is universal, physiological and nervous phenomena are necessitated, but perhaps not conscious states"; that "to prove conscious states determined, we should have to show a necessary connection between them and cerebral states and there is no such proof"; that, therefore, "physical determinism, when assumed to be universal, postulates psychological determinism." He says¹⁶ that "we must not overrate the part played by the principle of the conservation of energy in the history of the natural sciences. In its present form it marks a certain phase in the evolution of certain sciences; but it has not been the governing factor in this evolution and we should be wrong in making it the indispensable postulate of all scientific research." Further, "it implies that a system can return to its original state. It

¹⁵ Bergson, *op. cit.*, cf. pp. 145-150.

¹⁶ Bergson, *op. cit.*, cf. pp. 150-155.

neglects duration and hence is inapplicable to living beings and to conscious states."

Thus "the so-called physical determinism is reducible at bottom to a psychological determinism" which "depends on an associationist conception of the mind" which, in turn, "involves a defective conception of the self."¹⁷ Bergson concludes:¹⁸

Therefore it is only an inaccurate psychology, misled by language, which will show us the soul determined by sympathy, aversion, or hate as though by so many forces pressing upon it. These feelings, provided that they go deep enough, each make up the whole soul, since the whole content of the soul is reflected in each of them. To say that the soul is determined under the influence of any one of these feelings is thus to recognize that it is self-determined . . . the outward manifestation of this inner state (that is, a state of mind reflecting the whole personality) will be just what is called a free act, since the self alone will have been the author of it, and since it will express the whole of the self. Freedom, thus understood, is not *absolute*, as a radical libertarian philosophy would have it; it admits of degrees. . . . Here will be found, without the fundamental self, a parasitic self which continually en-

¹⁷ Bergson, *op. cit.*, cf. pp. 155-165.

¹⁸ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

croaches upon the other. Many live this kind of life, and die without having known true freedom.

Finally:¹⁹

. . . we are free when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work. It is no use asserting that we are then yielding to the all-powerful influence of our character—our character is still ourselves; and because we are pleased to split the person into two parts so that by an effort of abstraction we may consider in turn the self which feels or thinks and the self which acts, it would be very strange to conclude that one of the two selves is coercing the other. Those who ask whether we are free to alter our character lay themselves open to the same objection. Certainly our character is altering perceptibly every day, and our freedom would suffer if these new acquisitions were grafted on to our self and not blended with it. But, as soon as this blending takes place, it must be admitted that the change which has supervened in our character belongs to us, that we have appropriated it.

In a word, if it is agreed to call every act free

¹⁹ Bergson, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173. I would apologize for giving so much detail in presenting Bergson's doctrine of freedom, were it not for the general difficulty of the subject and, especially, that I feel constrained to make such a presentation in order to establish more clearly the validity of the inferences I am about to draw.

which springs from the self and from the self alone, the act which bears the mark of our personality is truly free, for our self alone will lay claim to its paternity. It would thus be recognized that free will is a fact, if it were agreed to look for it in a certain characteristic of the decision which is taken, in the free act itself.

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Such are the nature and the grounds of the Bergsonian doctrine of free will. What are its religious values? They are direct and evident and, to my mind, connect helpfully with the basal religious conceptions of human kinship, communion, and coöperation with God. In one form or another, explicitly or implicitly, logically or illogically, these three ideas have always accompanied religion, to a greater or less extent. Indeed, they seem to be essentially bound up with it.

In considering the religious conception of *kinship with God*, we must distinguish between the "theanthropic" and the "theocratic" tendencies of religions. The former tendency emphasizes the idea of a natural kinship between man and God; the belief that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him." Upon the

basis of this presupposition, religion is merely coming into one's own, a growing up into "the measure of the stature of the fulness" of the divine life already sown in the soul. This is religion of the "once-born" type. The latter tendency, however, (namely, the "theocratic") emphasizes the "natural enmity" between man and God. With Paul it pits the "natural man" against the "spiritual man" in an intense struggle which can only be ended by divine intervention of a drastic sort. Here kinship, if it comes at all, is acquired, or rather, it is imparted by the bestowal of supernatural grace and power in a marked way. We must note, however, that even here there is a recognition of implicit kinship in the assumption that humanity is capable of "receiving the Spirit." The difference between these two types of religion is one of emphasis and of interpretation, due to varying types of personality, with consequent differences in the nature and processes of religious experience. There is no abysmal cleft between the two and neither should be looked upon as exhausting the possibilities of religious truth to the exclusion of the opposing type. Both have made

large contributions to the religious advance of humanity and will doubtless continue to do so.

Now Bergson's doctrine of freedom looks in both directions and affords a fair basis for both these varieties of religious experience. The soul of man, the only truly free thing on earth, is of the same stuff as the Vital Impetus itself; comes from it; is, indeed, in a sense part of it, and shares its native freedom and creative power. This is a spiritual kinship of the most intimate kind, seeming to need scant, if any, elaboration in order to become the religious conception of a natural, spiritual relationship between man and God. In fact, the kinship may be carried still further, too far for some. Man and God are alike in the fact of limitation as well as in the fact of freedom and power; but of course not by any means alike in the *degree* of either power or limitation. A great difference between man and God remains. If not, it would be idle to speak of any compatibility between Bergsonism and religion. But this difference is not one of kind, but of degree of freedom, creative power, and spirituality. Thus the fact of kinship is clear.

But, on the other hand, Bergson holds that,

due to matter and the development of human intellect towards supremacy over matter, man has had his soul increasingly bent towards matter, towards inertness and materiality. As a consequence, it is hard to live on the spiritual side of our nature. It takes a wrench, a right-about-face, a plunge into the interior of our true being away from superficiality, determinism and lifelessness. According to Bergson, life, in order to be truly life, must be for most of us, in the very nature of the case, a fierce struggle between the "natural man" and the "spiritual man." In short, our author presents us with a philosophical basis for "theocratic" as well as for "theanthropic" interpretations of religion, for the "twice-born" type as well as for the "once-born" type. Both may be retained and sanctioned as legitimate. There is great value in this. Representatives of the two types have tended towards mutual exclusiveness, suspecting the reality or scorning the value of a religious experience varying from the form acceptable to them. Each has insisted that all should be saved in his way or not at all. "Orthodoxy is 'my doxy' and heterodoxy is 'your doxy.'" In this particu-

lar instance Bergson makes for an intelligent "live-and-let-live" attitude, but not necessarily for an indifferent tolerance. According to his view it is a matter of *life*, not of tolerance merely. There should be regard for personality, individuality, "varieties of religious experience," but at the same time this deference would have necessary limits due to the intense longing of the soul for a spiritual result.

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Unless we wish to divest the word religion of all distinctive meaning, we must hold that its essential characteristic, at least in its higher forms, is a spiritual *communion* between *persons*. However difficult it may be to conceive personality in God, and however divine personality may be interpreted, crudely or more philosophically, it is a plain fact that historic religious experience has always rested upon a belief in the reality of a personal communication between God and man. To reduce religion to anything less, or to transform it into anything else, is to reduce it to nothing or to transform it away. Religion may *include* the sense of unity, and as a matter of fact usually does, but it is not *merely* a sense of unity. It

may *include* the good and the beautiful—often it has not done so—but it is not merely the recognition of ideal good and beauty. To say that it is the recognition of values, as Höfding does, is to confuse the fact rather than to describe it. Such a conception would eliminate the very center from which, according to the religious man's own experience, all value flows.

It is another doctrine of Bergson—the doctrine of intuition—which touches most closely the phenomenon of religious communion. In fact, Bergsonian intuition is as nearly a counterpart of this fundamental religious act as anything purely philosophical could be. But the doctrine of freedom is closely connected with it also. Without freedom as a postulate it would be impossible to argue in behalf of intuition, as Bergson understands that word. In like manner, freedom is the necessary postulate of religious communion. All true social relationships of an inward nature are based on freedom. No inward relationship is possible between a man and a stone, even when poetic imagination is most at work. Indeed, in the approximative social relationships, namely, between man and the higher

animals in whom, to be sure, we do find a relative degree of freedom, a great deal of the social result—though not all, by any means—is due to the poetic transference to the animal of human motives and thoughts. Bergson himself has pointed out²⁰ that our sense of the comic in animals is due largely to this endowment of human qualities which we bestow upon them.

It is in our human relationships alone that we may truly speak of “soul knit to soul,” and this soul union can take place only in the atmosphere of freedom. We have all observed the fruitlessness of the effort of those who force their attentions on others, and cases of apparent success are due to the admixture of elements other than that of mere persistent pressure. The substitution of compulsion for free choice has strewn the world with the wreckage of individuals, organizations, and states. The life of friendship and of love is one of free choice. We cannot force it or compel it. It comes, or it does not come. It is born in spontaneity or not at all, and the very cradle of this spontaneity is freedom.

²⁰ Cf. his “Essay on Laughter.”

What is true of human relationships is pre-eminently true also of the relationship between man and God. It is significant for religion, therefore, that more than any other philosopher, Bergson insists on freedom as fundamental. God is a free, creative Being sending out His streams of free life into the universe. Man's soul is a "tiny rill" from this great wave; not wholly free, as we have seen, but free nevertheless. These two, God and man, are the only existences in which even an appreciable amount of freedom is observable. Hence it is only between man and man, and between man and God, that communion can take place; and this is so because of the fact of freedom. Besides, this very freedom tends to establish communion. In fact, Bergson's idea of evolution is that of a spiritual development in which there is increasingly free interaction between the Vital Impetus and those individual offshoots from it which constitute our human personalities. Now it is in this very freedom of communion—alike religious, between God and man, and ethical, between man and man—that the heart of religion is centered. Other things being equal, therefore, a philosophy which in-

sists on the fact of freedom and, indeed, makes it central, is in so far favorable both to religious and to ethical development.

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The kind and degree of *coöperation* between man and God, taught and practised in any given religion, depends upon the kind and degree of freedom it postulates. All religion seems to imply a certain amount of coöperation. No matter how much may be ascribed to God, man must do something, or there is no religion. Even in the "nature religions" of primitive times, whose adherents were born into the religious relationship as into the tribe, and thought of it as a relationship of physical necessity, the devotee had to coöperate with his inescapable master, or suffer; and in Islam, fatalistic though it be, the thought of human coöperation is not absent. In some religions it may be present by virtue of a lack of logic, but present it always is, more or less. In the higher forms of religion, the element of coöperation is always prominent. Sectarian differences may produce variation in the kind and amount of the emphasis, but they do not eliminate it. Predes-
tinarian Calvinism, for instance, has exercised

a tremendous social influence through its spirit of coöperative responsibility as, for example, in its relation to the rise of industrialism and capitalism.

Now freedom may indeed be so conceived as to destroy the thought and spirit of coöperation, but, on the other hand, it is not possible to conceive of any *real* coöperation, much less to actualize it, without presupposing freedom. Coöperation is not mere physical togetherness. The latter may be due entirely to compulsion, or to mere chance. Coöperation is a togetherness of spirit in effort, and results only from the free choice of two or more beings who may or may not make that choice. The meaning and value of coöperation lies in this very thing, that men *wish* to work together and do work together—with God, or with their fellows—though they need not. It is hard to think of anything worthy the name of religion which does not include this characteristic. Certainly we may not take this feature out of the Christian religion and expect to find the latter recognizable. Christ taught his disciples to do this or that, “that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in

Heaven." The essential difference between the "sheep" and the "goats," in the famous parable, lay precisely in this, that the "sheep" coöperated and the "goats" did not. The apostle Paul continually urges his hearers to become "co-workers with God." In short, Christianity's preëminent claim to superiority has been its inherent tendency towards coöperation, with the beneficent social and individual results which issue therefrom.

Bergson's philosophy might as fairly be called "The Philosophy of Freedom" as "The Philosophy of Change." Certainly freedom is one of its foundation stones. But freedom is also the essential foundation of true coöperation which, in turn, as we have seen, is in the very center of the religious structure itself, especially in the case of the higher religions. The direct and essential relation of this Bergsonian doctrine to the welfare of religion and to the progress of morality, is evident. In fact, the whole Bergsonian theory makes the relation of action to development very close and fundamental. In spite of his tendency towards mysticism, or rather, because of the special way in which he conceives the more or less mystical

act of intuition, Bergson may be said to teach that we must *do* in order to *be*. Indeed he holds that we most truly exercise the special birthright of our being in a certain kind of *act*, namely the act in which our whole personality finds expression—the free act *par excellence*.

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In addition to these three ideas which, as we have seen, find a favoring basis in Bergson's emphasis on freedom, there are several other religious values which suggest themselves. The very idea of freedom itself finds a ready response in the heart of the truly religious. Politicians, and all guardians of "things as they are," have always reckoned with and feared religious sentiment because it has always displayed a notorious willingness to break out against "things as they are" for the sake of "things as they ought to be." Like mankind at war, religion has often developed a free carelessness regarding the existing order. The defects of this quality should not blind us. When a man, a race, or a religion loses the power or the desire to push through existing opposition, then life itself departs. Bergson's idea of freedom does not frown upon the legiti-

macy of such profound and fundamentally non-rational uprisings. Some think that the chief weakness of the philosophy lies in the possible encouragement it may give to this very kind of action.

We need not here discuss the relative value to human progress of emotional movements on the one hand, and rational guidance on the other hand. I merely wish to point out that a religious freedom molded on Bergsonian lines would not be, and could not be, mere caprice. His conception of human freedom is very far from that of wilfulness or capriciousness. In the first place, it is neither complete nor continuous, even in the best of us. In fact, moments of real freedom are rare. We are most of the time in the grip of forces which we can not change or control. We live for the most part on the superficial plane of habit and we are bound by external realities which we can not ignore. Great emotional crises in individuals, fateful emotional movements among men, can only be occasional. They are indeed very rare. But rare though they be, are they not capricious and harmful when they do come? And does not Bergson's theory legitimize

this harmful element in life? Wilful action is doubtless afforded favorable opportunity by such great upheavals but, on the contrary, history shows that the best we have has often come in this way. It is as if men, individually or as a race, had taken unconscious counsel with their deeper selves and had risen in the might of the resultant conviction to heights otherwise unattainable. Whether this be true of all movements of this kind, it is certainly very largely true of many of them, especially those of a religious nature.

To say that Bergson's doctrine of freedom legitimatizes these movements is, therefore, not tantamount to saying that it fosters caprice and license. Its emphasis is rather upon the fact and right of such deep-going and far-reaching spiritual forces, the guerdon of whose freedom is the very human progress we all acclaim. Certainly religion can not but welcome as favorable a philosophic idea so generous towards its greatest moments. It is only the timidly conventional, or the selfish upholders of "things as they are," who should be troubled by this kinship. In their foolish wisdom they try either to discredit religion

per se, or so to emasculate it as to render it harmless and unfruitful. Bergson's theory of freedom would do neither, and that is why many do not relish it.

But there is, I think, still more to be said. Freedom has always been conceived by religionists as freedom through subjection, as, for instance, in Paul's epistle to the Galatians which is, of course, our classic source regarding "the freedom of the Christian man." Now Paul was charged by his opponents with exerting just the sort of immoral and destructive influence whose shadow has just been flitting across our apprehensive minds—the immorality and destructiveness of unrestrained freedom. But Paul justifies by its fruits the freedom he has been inculcating, characterizes it as the freedom of subjection to the spirit of Christ, and urges his followers to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free." It is, indeed, characteristic of religious freedom that it is a freedom of voluntary subjection to a Higher Power who enters into inward and vitalizing relations with the worshiper.

Now, the moral caliber of the freedom will

depend entirely upon the moral character of this power. Bergson, of course, does not carry his discussion into this field and we are therefore dependent upon reasonable inference from what he does say. But the nature of freedom and the process accompanying the free act, according to his account, are strikingly parallel to the nature and process of religious freedom as just described. There is the same plunge into the depths of the inner life, the subordination of the outward and the superficial to the inward and the fundamental; there is the intuitive act, by which the life of reality itself—the Vital Impetus—pours into the soul with all its own freedom; there is the same resolution of difficulties, the overcoming of obstacles, and the freedom of oneness with reality—an inner and an outer harmony. As in religion, so here the moral content of the freedom depends upon the moral content of the inpouring reality itself. Bergson has said that we can note the direction of the tendency we call life—the Vital Impetus—by studying its past results. How else has religion come to appreciate the moral character of its God? The Bergsonian doctrine of freedom, there-

fore, is not necessarily divorced from the so-called restraints of morality. Unless the Vital Impetus is immoral, or a-moral—and we have reason to think that, in Bergson's idea, it is neither—we need not especially fear the influence of Bergsonian freedom. Certainly religion need not fear it.

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Bergson's doctrine of freedom also affords interesting parallels to the religious doctrine of *conversion*. To my mind, conversion is a fundamental element of religion. I do not mean to identify the word merely with those extremes of emotional reaction which embody objectionable and un-religious features. Still, for one of a strong, decided nature, whose life has been proceeding rapidly and energetically in an immoral direction, a change is apt to be just as rapid and just as decided, a "right-about-face," if change comes at all. But even in the "decent" man, whose life, in spite of its decency, has been supremely selfish, a realization of a soul-hardened state may produce, and has produced, a great emotional reaction with a sudden change of life-direction. More difficult to observe, but none the less real, are

the innumerable little "conversions" which mark the life even of those whose general trend is upward. In what, pray, does this upward trend consist, if not in turning the back upon the lower motives which tempt or win us, and in turning the face towards the opposite motives and ideals? The fact of conversion, then, is, I hold, fundamental to all religious life of a higher sort.

We must consequently expect a philosophy to be favorable to the phenomena of conversion, if it is to be deemed compatible with religion. Bergson's philosophy is so, as we have already suggested. Freedom, according to Bergson, is both something achieved and something which is presented to us. It is something to be achieved in that we must turn our backs upon the indolence, inertness, and materiality which shadow our life. If I may employ religious language, we must "*become sons of God*" by a deliberate act of the will. No easy sliding from stage to stage, by an unconscious or semi-unconscious process. Heroism, rather, is demanded.

To quote Bergson's own words: ²¹

²¹ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 169-170.

Moreover we will grant to determinism that we often resign our freedom in more serious circumstances, and that, by sluggishness or indolence, we allow this same local process to run its course when our whole personality ought, so to speak, to vibrate. When our most trustworthy friends agree in advising us to take some important step, the sentiments which they utter with so much insistence lodge on the surface of our ego and there get solidified in the same way as the ideas of which we spoke just now. Little by little they will form a thick crust which will cover up our own sentiments; we shall believe that we are acting freely, and it is only by looking back to the past, later on, that we shall see how much we were mistaken.

But then, at the very minute when the act is going to be performed, *something* may revolt against it. It is the deep-seated self rushing up to the surface. It is the outer crust bursting, suddenly giving way to an irresistible thrust. Hence in the depths of the self, below this most reasonable pondering over most reasonable pieces of advice, something else was going on—a gradual heating and a sudden boiling over of feelings and ideas, not unperceived, but rather unnoticed. If we turn back to them and carefully scrutinize our memory, we shall see that we had ourselves shaped these ideas, ourselves lived these feelings, but that, through some strange reluctance to exercise our will, we had thrust them back into the

darkest depths of our soul whenever they came up to the surface.

This very quotation also shows that, in a sense perhaps even more fundamental than that of achievement, freedom is something which is *presented* to us—a gift from without, or “from above.” Certainly, according to Bergson, the ultimate *source* of our ability to aim for and to achieve freedom is outside ourselves. It is the Vital Impetus, coming into us and urging us on. And, when freedom is achieved in any instance, it is merely that we have merged our life more completely in the Vital Impetus; we have captured more of it for our very own. For this very freedom itself means, sharing in the creative power of the great Source of life. May we not call it God? Also, the path to this freedom is a turning from the lower to the higher self or, as Bergson prefers to put it, a plunge from the superficial self down into the deeper self, by intuition. In the Pauline sense of the word, this is an act of vital “faith”—not merely faith in one’s self but faith in the Source of life also.

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But we may go a step farther and find still another interesting parallel. From one point of view, *salvation* is the be-all and end-all of religion. Whether it be thought of as an escape from something evil or as the bestowal of something good, or both, salvation is the heart-cry of religion. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, *and we are not saved*," cries the discouraged believer. That is, the main object of his religion has not yet been attained. We need not discuss the variety of detail embroidered upon this conception in the course of religious history. Suffice it to say that the general tendency has been to represent salvation as a matter both of the present life and of the beyond, the latter emphasis usually predominating. But what interests us now is that, in either case, in some way or other, salvation has always meant joy and freedom through union with, or subjection to, God, the Source of all joy and freedom.

According to Bergson, the goal of evolution is freedom, achieved, though only partially achieved as yet, in man alone. This freedom is the very life of the Final Reality itself—the Vital Impulse—for which Bergson himself

does not hesitate occasionally to use the word God, though not in a specifically religious sense, of course. In other words, the goal of life is the freedom of glad creativeness, a freedom from the bondage of the inert, through union with and, may we not fairly say, subjection to the Source of life. As has been said, this goal has been attained by man, but only in part and rarely. But the whole philosophy of "Creative Evolution" breathes the hope and expectation of more—more freedom, more life, a glorious future. Indeed, in personal conversation and in occasional writings and addresses, Bergson has given definite expression to an open-mindedness, not to say a hope, regarding life after death, and even in his more formal writings he has gone out of his way to give an occasional hint in that direction.

Here again, as elsewhere, the concrete compatibility of these ideas and suggestions with, for instance, the Christian idea of salvation, depends upon the character that may be assigned to the Vital Impetus—the ground of these facts and hopes. Bergson has declared that we may understand the Vital Impetus, and trace its tendency hitherto, by means of

the facts of life itself. In addition to this, certain definite statements assure us that his conception of it is not divorced from the moral and spiritual development of mankind. If this be so, it would be quite possible, within the sphere of Bergson's influence, to maintain a highly ethical and spiritual doctrine of salvation. In certain ways, in fact, the Bergsonian teaching would stimulate such a doctrine. Bergson's influence would certainly be against any doctrine of salvation which consisted in "World-Flight" merely. The "world" is not to be ignored. It cannot be. In fact, it is good, for it is a necessary element in the achievement of the goal. Matter is indeed an enemy, but it is also a challenge; and the "world" is to be transcended, not ignored or escaped. In other words, while purely mystic religions of contemplation may find much sympathy in Bergson, legal religions will find none; and, in this particular at least, Bergsonism will favor that union of mysticism and active participation in the world as it is, which is so marked a characteristic of Christianity.

A Bergsonian could consistently conceive of salvation as a continual growth in spiritual

life—a life beginning in this world, but continuing in “the next world.” Whether death would mean the entire elimination of bodily factors, or merely a change in their form (either would be possible, on this basis), it would still be an incident of *life*, and not life’s necessary terminus. No abyss would separate the sphere of salvation here from the sphere beyond. They would remain morally and spiritually continuous. The Bergsonian philosophy would not only *sanction* such a doctrine as this; it would seem actively to suggest it.

One feature of Christianity which is an important element in its superiority, is *the value* which it places upon *the individual*, and the consequent *sense of personal worth* which it thus arouses. Religions that tend towards pantheism, whose goal is absorption in the Infinite, lack this energetic and valuable factor; and even the legal religions, such as Judaism and Islam, which do indeed stimulate personal activity of a sort, tend to lessen individuality by subjecting it to external rules. Judaism, of course, possesses powerful counter-forces, inherited from Hebrew Prophetism,

which offset this tendency, but Islam, on the other hand, suffers even further in this direction because of its thorough-going fatalism. A sense of personal worth is essential to the development of the highest life, and is often essential to life itself; it is also essential to the development of the highest type of religious experience. However we may explain it, this quality is found in Christianity above all other religions.

Bergson's doctrine of freedom is quite in line with this phase of Christian emphasis. The increasing freedom, in the development of organic life, through vegetative torpor and the lower animals to the higher, wide-ranging animals, results in greater and greater individuation. In man individuality is most marked and, in a new sense, it may again be said that man is the center of the universe. He alone can achieve inner freedom, and that triumph of personality elevates him to genuine fellowship with the reality of the universe, in whose creative power he shares. What he does, as a free man, counts—eternally counts—and, waiving for the moment all thought of a possible future existence, even if his personal ac-

tivity is limited to this life alone, he must have a sense of its eternal significance and of his own permanent value as an active and self-determining participator in the destiny of the universe. A philosophy which did not support this feeling of personal worth might be compatible with certain religions, but it would surely not be compatible with Christianity. On the other hand, a philosophy in which this sense of individuality and of personal value is inherent, would seem in so far to be more compatible with Christianity than with any other religion. "Bergson holds the essentially Christian view that man is the chief concern of God. 'I see in the whole evolution of life on our planet an effort to arrive . . . at something which is only realized in man.' " ²²

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Finally, there are several by-products of Bergson's doctrine of freedom which we should note. In the first place, without real freedom there can be no real morality. "The essence of morality is in deciding new issues for which we have no past to guide us—the vanguard of

²² Cf. article on Bergson in *Current Literature*, February, 1912.

the development of the moral code.”²³ “Morality is a voluntary rise to a higher level . . . a new, original, creative, unprecedented act.”²⁴ Physical duress changes the legal status of an act. Duress of any sort, inward or outward, not only *changes* the *moral* status of an act. It abolishes it. They who are afraid of such doctrines as those of Bergson need to be reminded that the very values for whose existence they fear have been created by freedom and are maintained by it. “Safety zones” may do for momentary stopping places *en route*, but one must leave the “zone” to get across the street in either direction, else night will fall and one will remain under its shadow and that of a policeman.

In the fight for freedom Bergson gives us a “moral equivalent for war.” Matter is our enemy and we must overcome it. We *can*, therefore we *must*. Some do, therefore others try to follow them. We may become the masters of our fate, the “captains of our souls,” hence we are responsible and ethical beings. Both growth and deterioration are possible.

²³ L. P. Jacks, *The Alchemy of Thought*.

²⁴ L. P. Jacks, quoted by E. E. Slosson, in the *Independent*, June 8, 1911.

If it is not the one, then it will be the other. There is no neutral territory in this war. It is either conquer or be conquered. "He that is not with me is against me," cries the Vital Impetus. This call to join in the creative work of the world admits of no parleying, no dallying. One must decide to go in on one side or the other. The issue is so sharp and so tremendous that it stirs the blood, rouses sleeping forces, and furnishes all the essential elements of progress and self-development—interest, attention, opposition, struggle, the inner call to the more and the higher, the sense of conquest, the realization of personal and eternal values. As Steenbergen pictures it,²⁵ in his excellent account of Bergson's philosophy, "Freedom and spirit are all too easily overcome by matter through habit. New life and effort are needed when thought becomes a mere formula. We must preserve ourselves from automatism. Moral action is limited by the double activity of spirit, namely, concentration upon action, and self-consciousness regarding our true nature. We must gird ourselves through attention to practical life for

²⁵ A. Steenbergen, *Henri Bergson's Intuitive Philosophie*.

the sake of strength, and we must also turn away from practical life to see the way."

But this emphasis upon individuality and personal effort does not carry with it a crass individualism. In the first place, Bergson does not identify the experience of the individual with his passing consciousness. The experience of a man is the sum total of his conscious experience wrapt up in the unconscious memory, his soul, his character. But more than this, beyond the individual there are the experiences of his fellowmen which are also expressions of the Vital Impetus, individual "rills" of experience of independent value. Thus the "experience of the race" becomes a life factor to be reckoned with, and room is made for social relations and social values, and for that interaction between individuals and groups which is so fundamental to all development, both social and individual. Levine says,²⁸ "Bergson believes that mankind is tending more and more towards social ethics . . . (a) social ethics based on the principles of harmonious collective action and social solidarity." This can only mean that Bergson recognizes a

²⁸ *Louis Levine*, "Interview with Bergson." cf. the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

necessary social element in the activity of the Vital Impulse itself. Indeed we might say that, on this view, the nature and workings of the Vital Impulse would be, in certain respects, more evident and more authoritative in social life than in individual life. At any rate, there could be no narrow individualism. There must be a recognition of social life, its arrangements and responsibilities. The fundamental responsibility is that of spreading and increasing the life of which the Vital Impulse is the source. This means a social activity and a social interaction out of which new values and new energies will come—a free combination of individual autonomy with social responsibility. What is this but a “Creative Evolution” which is essentially ethical? Is not such a fusion of individuality and subordination the very gist not only of morality but also of all higher forms of religion, and especially of Christianity?

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This social emphasis suggests a concluding thought which, very fittingly, leads us back again to religion. “True religion and undefiled” has always been a great leveler. “God

is no respecter of persons." This is why certain men do not worship Him; or, if they do support religion, they try to twist it and turn it to suit their own theories of human nature. Religions generally, and Christianity particularly and most emphatically, insist that all men are equal before God. There is, therefore, an element of universality, sociality, and even of democracy, in the very nature of religion. The tendency of Bergsonism to include sociality as well as individuality, points in the same direction, especially when we consider the basis of that tendency. Its ground is in the Vital Impetus, the source of all life, before which free souls are equal; through which and because of which they are enabled, are morally obliged in fact, to enter into social relations with a full recognition of one another's status and value. While there is no basis here for inferring the elimination of all differences and distinctions, a firm basis is given for the religious tenet of equality "in the spirit," and for the negation of all narrow and selfish exclusiveness.

CHAPTER VII

IMMORTALITY

It is generally assumed that the desire for immortality and some form of belief in it are universal, or well-nigh universal, human traits. On the other hand, as Dr. Osler points out in his Ingersoll lecture,¹ one may talk with many today to whom the future life is a matter of apparently complete indifference, if not of actual agnosticism or of positive disbelief. As one observes the common run of men also, one may note in general a fixed course of action whose motives seem to spring out of considerations limited to this life alone. "Getting and begetting" explain most of men's actions, and human life in its individual, social, and political aspects does not seem to be shot through with any lively hope regarding what lies beyond the grave.

It may indeed be true that this undoubted fact is due to causes that have been operative

¹ William Osler, *Science and Immortality*, Boston, 1904.

only within recent years, and that we have now to reckon with a phenomenon which may be but a phase through which human thought is passing—a lack of proper adaptation to new knowledge. However that may be, it is certain that new knowledge has tended, even though temporarily, to turn men away from dependence upon a belief in immortality; in fact it has tended to turn them towards disbelief, or at least towards agnosticism. The evolutionary conception of the universe, according to which man appears as an infinitesimal speck upon a minor planet which is set in the midst of an infinite number of rolling spheres in a cosmos whose age and size defy imagination; the modern biological view of life, according to which the great primal life energy brings forth a myriad of passing forms, man among them, which, in their purely biological aspect, seem to exist only for the continuance of that primal physical force itself; the tendency among psychologists to assume that the mind is only a function of the brain, that all mental activity is not only accompanied by brain activity but is also caused and conditioned by it—that, as Cabanis said, “The brain secretes thought as the liver

secretes bile," or, as Moleschott said, "No thought without phosphorus"; finally, our prevailing absorption in the task of subduing physical nature to our will, making it practically profitable to us; all these modern tendencies have united to dim the vision of a future life and to make such a life seem vague, uncertain, unpractical, or unbelievable.

But one may well raise the question whether even past ages have treasured this faith with the universality, pertinacity, and conviction so often ascribed to them. Certainly it was formerly more easy than now to pass from a natural longing for immortality to a belief in it, but, to one living in their midst, the most passionate and permanent devotion of the ancients would probably have appeared a devotion to the here and the now, as that of our contemporaries appears to us. Whatever their formal faith, they attended, as we attend, to the things that are nearest and most tangible. Indeed, in certain striking instances, of recognized importance, even a formal faith seems to have been lacking, or practically lacking. While the early Hebrews had their *Sheól*, they so conceived it as to make death the end of all that

was worth while to them. As a result they besought Jehovah for length of days that they might have as much blessedness as possible before death came; they treasured the gift of children, among other reasons, that they might have at least that measure of increased continuance; they pictured a messianic kingdom whose blessings were purely temporal and, to a considerable extent also, purely physical. The Buddhist also, while fearing the probability of a succession of future existences, asserts the possibility of avoiding a future which he dreads, and prescribes a definite course of action to that end.

And yet, all said and done, it is still true that mankind throughout the ages has held and treasured a belief in life after death and that, in the main, it still does so. The Chinese cherish the hope that they too may some day become worshiped ancestors, after having so long been worshiping descendants. The early Hebrew conception of *Sheol*, shadowy and unmoral as it was, contained the germ of the later eschatology of Judaism, or was at least a form which readily lent itself to the reception of new content in the natural course of

Jewish development. The *Sheól* of later Judaism became highly personalized and moralized, sometimes as the abode of the righteous alone, sometimes differentiated in its inner arrangements so as to receive both "the sheep and the goats." The very desire and plan of the Buddhist to achieve *Nirvana* are proofs of his conviction that most men are unfortunately condemned to another personal, individual life after death; probably a series of lives; in some cases, perhaps, an unending series of them. In other words, the prevailing idea that, in past ages, a belief in a future life was universal, is at least very near the truth.

Today, also, we must recognize the fact that most men, the world over, remain comparatively untouched by the new considerations previously mentioned. Whether illusion or fact, their belief in a future life is as strong as their desire for it. And most men desire it, at least in a vague sort of way. Even with most of those who have achieved sophistication regarding this and other religious problems, there is a longing and a hope, at least at times, which protests against the negative and unsatisfying conclusions of their intellect. At

times the upwelling of fundamental feeling so nearly overbears intellectual sturdiness and honesty that they are almost ready to say with Cicero that they would rather be wrong with those who affirm it than right with those who deny it.

But it is not my purpose in this chapter to argue the general question of immortality. My intention is merely to discuss the matter in relation to the religious significance of Bergson's philosophy. We shall come in a moment to the more direct phases of our subject. Meanwhile it will not be totally beside the mark to point out that this widespread sense of unsatisfied longing, among those who doubt or disbelieve in a future existence, is deeply grounded in the needs of human thought and life. The demand of the intellect for rationality in the universe, and the demand of the whole man for what may be called a law of the conservation of spiritual energy and value—these two demands go to the root of things and thus necessarily enter into the problem of immortality as well as into that of religion generally.

The first demand expresses itself thus:

Human life *appears* to be the noblest product of evolution. Can a universe be rational which presents such an appearance and continually tempts us to act upon such an assumption, if it is not really true that man is the highest? And by "highest," of course, we must mean a distinctively psychical thing. This demand then continues by asking, "Is a universe rational in which so much labor is spent on its finest product only to dash the product to pieces after a span of years which is as nothing, a mere watch in the night?"

The second demand expresses itself thus: The continued exertion of the will depends upon a feeling of worth-whileness in the work, upon the feeling that somehow there will be permanent value in what is done. While one may be so self-forgetful as not to need his own continued existence and blessedness as a spur (very few are), he would surely be definitely affected by the thought of the certain extinction of all men. The incentive afforded by a regard for subsequent generations also loses its edge when the final extinction of all these generations is postulated. Besides there is no guarantee of the unending existence of our

planet. Quite the opposite. What then? On such a view the transitory effect and value of all human effort would bear down upon present motive and enthusiasm in an insupportable fashion. We might banish the thought and continue our altruistic plans on a purely emotional basis, but those who could do that successfully for any length of time would be those who had inherited that tendency and inspiration from forbears who acquired and maintained it on the very basis now swept away.

My chief reason for these possibly too extended introductory remarks is to emphasize my conviction that it does make a great deal of difference to a man *whether* he believes *in* a future life, and *what* he believes *about* the future life. *A fortiori* it makes a great deal of difference whether or no this faith plays a vital part in the thought and ideals of a people, a country, a generation. It intimately concerns our estimate of a philosophy, therefore, whether that philosophy tends towards, or away from, a belief in immortality. In view of the influence of Kant upon the ideals of nineteenth century Germany, not to extend the illustration more widely, it is idle to assert that philosophy and

philosophers make little difference and do not count. Even Napoleon feared the "German ideologists," as he called them, and in so saying, he meant the philosopher Fichte in particular.² Bergson may not be another Kant, or not even a Fichte, but he is widely influential. It is therefore significant to remark, in connection with the general considerations just adduced, that Bergson's thought, as we are about to see, is distinctly favorable to a belief in the continuance of individuality and personality after death.

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It is most natural that belief in a future life should always have close connections with religion. Certainly God may be conceived so as to make any belief in future life unessential to His worship. With the reservation already made in an earlier paragraph, one may instance in this connection the worship of Jehovah by the early Hebrews. Still it holds true that belief in God and in a future life have manifested themselves in human history as counterparts. One often has reason to regret this historic connection. The limited or distorted

² Cf. Priest, *Germany Since 1740*, p. 57.

views of earlier days are nowhere more clearly manifested than in the pictures of the future life drawn by pious artist or learned theologian. No Turk would desire for an Armenian a lot different from that which Tertullian assigns to non-believers. The only reason we can enjoy Dante's vivid pictures is because we know they are merely poetry. For the day in which these word pictures were drawn they were not merely poetry. Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" is a revelation to one who has not previously realized what once went under the name "Christian." Doubtless one reason for modern disbelief in a future life has been the concrete picturing of that life in ways that were either inadequate or actually offensive. Henry Holt expresses the unvoiced feeling of many who are weary of such unjustifiable and untrue concreteness when he says, with his customary downrightness, that one thing is certain about heaven, "there will be no damned nonsense there." ⁸

Yet it must be admitted that, granted the possibility of faith, the more concrete the picture the more lively the belief. But the day

⁸ Henry Holt, *On the Cosmic Relations*, New York, 1915.

of such concrete characterizations is gone and with their passing, one must admit, an inevitable diminution in the liveliness of the hope must come in. On the other hand, there is manifest danger in a too pronounced interest in the future. Self-seeking, lack of interest in the present task, lack of social consciousness—all these are well known accompaniments of an undue emphasis upon the future life. The solution seems to be to maintain a lively faith *that* it is along with a fitting modesty of opinion as to *what* it is, at least as far as details are concerned.

As we have just said, religion usually carries with it some form of belief in a life after death. The work of Charles ⁴ has demonstrated that the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era were centuries of unsurpassed spiritual growth in Judaism. One striking feature of this period is the change from a belief in an unblessed *Sheôl*, or shadowy abode of the dead, to a faith in a blessed immortality for the in-

⁴ Cf. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, edited by R. H. Charles; *Eschatology—Hebrew, Jewish and Christian*, by R. H. Charles, London, 1899. In this connection I would especially recommend Charles' popular but scholarly little book, *Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments*. Home University Series, Holt and Co.

dividual. Christianity entered into the inheritance of this late Jewish development and, consequently, the future life has always had a prominent place in its teaching. But, apart from historical connections of this sort, any religion based upon a lofty spiritual conception of God is bound, sooner or later, to meet and attempt to solve the problem of continued individual existence. In varying form the questionings of Job and of Ecclesiastes are sure to recur again and again, and no lofty faith in God can stand unimpaired if the scope of His activity is limited to this world alone, no matter how broadly social the conception may be. In the Christian religion the situation is most acute because of the two-fold primal emphasis upon the supreme worth of the individual and upon the loving character of God.

Therefore, in discussing the religious value of a philosophy, it is very much to the point to ask whether and how it is favorable to faith in a future life. In discussing a philosophy's compatibility with Christianity, these questions are essential. We are, as yet, without any formal discussion of this problem from Bergson's own pen. A few informal statements by

him are helpful and will be given here in due course. In general, however, we must rely upon reasonable inferences drawn from his dominant philosophical doctrines.

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In my judgment, the existing sensitiveness regarding faith in individual immortality centers about two points. One point is marked by the motto, "The mind is only a function of the brain"; the other by the phrase, "The individual is nothing—the organism is everything." The first of these two storm centers of disbelief may be described thus: There is no such thing as an independent existence of the soul of man. What we really mean by this old-fashioned and antiquated word, "soul," is, in fact, only a comparatively ephemeral mental life which owes its rise entirely to the kinetics of nervous tissue in the brain, owes its variety and individuality to its connection with a certain distinct physical organism and will lose all its individuality, nay even all existence, with the disappearance of brain and body. We see at once that if the human "soul" is to be explained, or explained away, in this fashion there is no use in proceeding

further. The question is settled. For what we mean by "immortality," "the future life," is the continuance of distinctive personality and individuality after death, and the position just sketched puts an end to the possibility of such a thing. We may deceive ourselves as we please with interpretations which define immortality in terms of continuing remembrance in the thought of others, in terms of a legacy of benefit left to our descendants. The heart of the matter is gone and our question is answered—negatively.

The second storm center is marked by the fundamental question: Has the individual any primary value? Has he eternal significance in and for himself? Approaching this question from the standpoint of our intimate friendships, our hearts predispose us in favor of an affirmative answer. Observation of men in the mass, however, often impresses and oppresses us with the likeness of men to animals, with the blindness, the senselessness, the pure physical drive of ordinary human life; and we feel that man is after all little, if any, better than the dumb beast which perisheth, little better than the flower that bloometh for a season and

then fadeth and withereth away into the physical elements from which it sprang. Contemplation of the hugeness of the universe, with its forces and its distances staggering to thought, gives rise to doubtful wonder that man should ever have been described as "but a little lower than the angels," an object of permanent value, the center and end of all the mighty travail of the æons. Also, close consideration of the progress of organic evolution reveals an apparent disregard, on nature's part, of the welfare and existence of the individual and an equally apparent solicitude for the welfare and preservation of the species, of the race.⁵ The resulting impression is that the individual man, like all other individual objects, is merely a small link in a great chain or, more accurately, an unessential by-product of a great impersonal force to which he is entirely secondary and entirely unnecessary.

To one who is mastered by an emotional reaction of this sort, or to whom this kind of reasoning has brought an abiding conviction,

⁵ Cf. Hermann, *graf* von Keyserling, *Unsterblichkeit*, München, 1911. This book takes the position just indicated in the text. One puts it down with an inescapable feeling of depression.

belief in immortality must appear as a chimera—beautiful and helpful, perhaps, but still only a chimera. In other words, faith in a future life is essentially bound up with the conviction that man is the pinnacle of creation, that in man we do have the goal towards whose attainment the whole of creation has been groaning and travailing until now. This latter conviction does not necessarily carry with it conviction of personal immortality, but faith in immortality, at least for us today, is directly dependent upon faith in the supreme worth of individual human existence.

We see, therefore, that a philosophy which is to be adjudged compatible with belief in personal immortality—and, as we have seen, that carries with it compatibility with an essential tenet of the Christian religion and of other religions as well—such a philosophy, I say, must maintain the independent existence of the human soul and must also favor a view which gives to the individual man supreme value. Now, Bergsonism squares itself clearly with both these tests of religious compatibility. Our author directly attacks those theories which reduce, or tend to reduce, mind to a purely

physical basis. In speaking of the problem of the relation between soul and body, he says:*

This relation, though it has been a favorite theme throughout the history of philosophy, has really been very little studied. If we leave on one side the theories which are content to state the "union of soul and body" as an irreducible and inexplicable fact, and those which speak vaguely of the body as an instrument of the soul, there remains hardly any other conception of the psycho-physiological relation than the hypothesis of "epiphenomenalism" or that of "parallelism," which in practice—I mean in the interpretation of particular facts—both end in the same conclusions. For whether, indeed, thought is regarded as a mere function of the brain and the state of consciousness as an epiphenomenon of the state of the brain, or whether mental states and brain states are held to be two versions, in two different languages, of one and the same original, in either case it is laid down that, could we penetrate into the inside of a brain at work and behold the dance of the atoms which make up the cortex, and if, on the other hand, we possessed the key to psycho-physiology, we should know every detail of what is going on in the corresponding consciousness.

This, indeed, is what is most commonly maintained by philosophers as well as by men of science. Yet

* Cf. Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, Int. pp. x-xii.

it would be well to ask whether the facts, when examined without any preconceived idea, really suggest an hypothesis of this kind. That there is a close connection between a state of consciousness and the brain we do not dispute. But there is also a close connection between a coat and the nail on which it hangs, for, if the nail is pulled out, the coat falls to the ground. Shall we say, then, that the shape of the nail gives us the shape of the coat, or in any way corresponds to it? No more are we entitled to conclude, because the physical fact is hung on to a cerebral state, that there is any parallelism between the two series psychical and physiological. When philosophy pleads that the theory of parallelism is borne out by the results of positive science, it enters upon an unmistakably vicious circle; for, if science interprets connection, which is a fact, as signifying parallelism, which is an hypothesis (and an hypothesis to which it is difficult to attach an intelligible meaning), it does so, consciously or unconsciously, for reasons of a philosophic order: it is because science has been accustomed by a certain type of philosophy to believe that there is no hypothesis more probable, more in accordance with the interests of scientific inquiry.

But Bergson does more than pull down the barns of his opponents. He attempts to build greater on his own account, and this attempt is in the direction of positive evidence for the independent existence of the spirit—or soul-

life of man. His predominate use of the word "memory" does not conceal the real issue for, as he himself says:⁷

Any one who approaches, without preconceived idea and on the firm ground of facts, the classical problem of the relations of soul and body, will soon see this problem as centering upon the subject of memory. . .

Again he says:⁸

We must now add that, as pure perception gives us the whole or at least the essential part of matter (since the rest comes from memory and is super-added to matter), it follows that memory must be, in principle, a power absolutely independent of matter. If, then, spirit is a reality, it is here, in the phenomenon of memory, that we may come into touch with it experimentally. And hence any attempt to derive pure memory from an operation of the brain should reveal on analysis a radical illusion.

Let us put the same matter in clearer language. We maintain that matter has no occult or unknowable power, and that it coincides, in essentials, with pure perception. Thence we conclude that the living body in general, and the nervous system in particular, are only channels for the transmission of movements, which, received in the form of stimulation, are transmitted in the form of action, reflex or voluntary.

⁷ *Cf. Matter and Memory*, Int. pp. xii-xiii.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 80-82.

That is to say, it is vain to attribute to the cerebral substance the property of engendering representations. Now the phenomena of memory, in which we believe that we can grasp spirit in its most tangible form, are precisely those of which a superficial psychology is most ready to find the origin in cerebral activity alone; just because they are at the point of contact between consciousness and matter, and because even the adversaries of materialism have no objection to treating the brain as a storehouse of memories. But if it could be positively established that the cerebral process answers only to a very small part of memory, that it is rather the effect than the cause, that matter is here as elsewhere the vehicle of an *action* and not the substratum of a *knowledge*, then the thesis which we are maintaining would be demonstrated by the very example which is commonly supposed to be most unfavorable to it, and the necessity might arise of erecting spirit into an independent reality. In this way also, perhaps, some light would be thrown on the nature of what is called spirit, and on the possibility of the interaction of spirit and matter. For a demonstration of this kind could not be purely negative. Having shown what memory is not, we should have to try to discover what it is.

This independent spirit-reality does not have to be continually conscious in order to exist.*

* *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

Without as yet going to the heart of the matter, we will confine ourselves to the remark that our unwillingness to conceive *unconscious psychical states* is due, above all, to the fact that we hold consciousness to be the essential property of psychical states: so that a psychical state can not, it seems, cease to be conscious without ceasing to exist. But if consciousness is but the characteristic note of the *present*, that is to say of the actually lived, in short of the *active*, then that which does not act may cease to belong to consciousness without therefore ceasing to exist in some manner. In other words, in the psychological domain, consciousness may not be the synonym of existence, but only of real action or of immediate efficacy. . .

This means that our "soul" is much more than present consciousness. Our conscious life is always a present focal point at which the whole past of our stored-up experience, our unconscious spirit-life, seeks to bore its way through the plane of the immediate into the future which lies beyond. One should read the whole of Chapter IV of *Matter and Memory* where Bergson sums up his case regarding the relation of soul and body. The following quotations give only a suggestion, and a very inadequate one at that, of the course and conclusions of the argument:

One general conclusion follows from the first three chapters of this book: it is that the body, always turned towards action, has for its essential function to limit, with a view to action, the life of the spirit.¹⁰ . . . the orientation of our consciousness towards action appears to be the fundamental law of our psychical life.

Strictly, we might stop here, for this work was undertaken to define the function of the body in the life of the spirit. But, on the one hand, we have raised by the way a metaphysical problem which we cannot bring ourselves to leave in suspense; and on the other, our researches, although mainly psychological, have on several occasions given us glimpses, if not of the means of solving the problem, at any rate of the side on which it should be approached.

This problem is no less than that of the union of soul and body. It comes before us clearly and with urgency, because we make a profound distinction between matter and spirit. And we cannot regard it as insoluble, since we define spirit and matter by positive characters, and not by negations. It is in very truth within matter that pure perception places us, and it is really into spirit that we penetrate by means of memory. But, on the other hand, whilst introspection reveals to us the distinction between matter and spirit, it also bears witness to their union. Either, then, our analyses are vitiated *ab origine*, or they

¹⁰ *Matter and Memory*, p. 233.

must help us to issue from the difficulties they raise.¹¹ . . . to touch the reality of spirit we must place ourselves at the point where an individual consciousness, continuing and retaining the past in a present enriched by it, thus escapes the law of necessity, the law which ordains that the past shall ever follow itself in a present which merely repeats it in another form, and that all things shall ever be flowing away. When we pass from pure perception to memory, we definitely abandon matter for spirit.¹²

For Bergson, there is such a thing as the human soul. It does not owe its origin to the brain, to matter. Indeed, the brain is merely a kind of central telephonic exchange for the transmission of messages both ways, between physical nature and the soul.¹³ The existence of the soul, therefore, is not dependent upon the brain. It seems clear, however, that the soul is not a static entity, but a growing thing whose growth, at least under existing human conditions, depends upon action; and action means the use of the brain for definite practical ends.

The acceptance of this phase of Bergson's teaching certainly leaves the way entirely open

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 234-235.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

for belief in individual immortality. It does more than that. It creates a presumption in favor of such a faith. More could hardly be expected of a philosopher who has until now definitely postponed the consideration of this particular subject. At present we can only draw inferences, for, in his formal works, Bergson offers us nothing more definite in the direction of a positive, constructive position. One important fact is certain: Bergson's theory, if true, sweeps away one set of stubborn objections to belief in a future life; it then proceeds, positively, to set up a basis upon which one is free and even encouraged to build his structure of faith.

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We now turn to consider the Bergsonian estimate of the individual. Our contention is that a philosophy, in order to show itself compatible with a belief in personal immortality, must favor a view which ascribes supreme value to the individual. Does Bergsonism do that?

In *Matter and Memory* we are led to the conclusion that the spirit of man is not the offspring of matter, nor yet its slave. Indeed, the general impression resulting from Berg-

son's thesis regarding the relations of mind and matter, soul and body, is one of heightened appreciation of the place of man in the universe. An examination of *Time and Free Will* yields the same result. Bergson contends that free will is a fact. To be sure, even man achieves it only rarely but man alone achieves it at all. The free act is preëminently a soulful act, and in its manifestation we may see, according to the philosophy of *Creative Evolution*, the workings of the Vital Impetus, the final reality of the universe. It takes but little imagination to see that this is only a modern way of saying ancient things about the supreme value of man.

It is in Bergson's volume on *Creative Evolution* that this doctrine of man is set forth most clearly and explicitly. No shallow optimism prevents Bergson from recognizing the present inferiority of man in certain directions, as, for example, in his powers of instinct; nor does he fail to give full play to the limiting and determining effect of physical forces. In speaking of man, also, as the goal of evolution, his distinctive teleological theory forces upon him a reserve and a restraint which may puzzle

those who are orthodox in their teleology. It may make them wonder whether Bergson's left hand does not take away what his right hand giveth. In spite of these considerations it is correct to say that *Creative Evolution* upholds belief in the supreme worth of man, and by that I mean not merely man, the species, but man, the individual. A few quotations will illustrate this.¹⁴

From this point of view, not only does consciousness appear as the motive principle of evolution, but also, among conscious beings themselves, man comes to occupy a privileged place. Between him and the animals the difference is no longer one of degree, but of kind.¹⁵

If, now, we should wish to express this in terms of finality, we should have to say that consciousness, after having been obliged, in order to set itself free, to divide organization into two complementary parts, vegetables on the one hand and animals on the other, has sought an issue in the double direction of instinct and of intelligence. It has not found it with instinct, and it has not obtained it on the side of intelligence except by a sudden leap from the animal to man. So

¹⁴ One should read the whole book, but especially, in this connection, Chapters II and III. In addition to the quotations given, I would call particular attention to pp. 101-102, 105, 126-134, 151, 191-192.

¹⁵ *Creative Evolution*, p. 182. One should read from p. 181.

that, in the last analysis, man might be considered the reason for the existence of the entire organization of life on our planet.¹⁶

Radical therefore, also, is the difference between animal consciousness, even the most intelligent, and human consciousness. For consciousness corresponds exactly to the living being's power of choice; it is co-extensive with the fringe of possible action that surrounds the real action: consciousness is synonymous with invention and with freedom. Now, in the animal, invention is never anything but a variation on the theme of routine. Shut up in the habits of the species, it succeeds, no doubt, in enlarging them by its individual initiative; but it escapes automatism only for an instant, for just the time to create a new automatism. The gates of its prison close as soon as they are opened; by pulling at its chain it succeeds only in stretching it. With man, consciousness breaks the chain. In man, and in man alone, it sets itself free. . .

They express the difference of kind, and not only of degree, which separates man from the rest of the animal world. They let us guess that, while at the end of the vast springboard from which life has taken its leap, all the others have stepped down, finding the cord stretched too high, man alone has cleared the obstacle.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 184-185. The rest of this paragraph modifies the force of the last sentence quoted, in the direction of Bergson's teleological theory, but does not take away its value for our present purpose.

It is in this quite special sense that man is the "term" and the "end" of evolution. . .

From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a center, spreads outwards, and which on almost the whole of its circumference is stopped and converted into oscillation: at one single point the obstacle has been forced, the impulsion has passed freely. It is this freedom that the human form registers. Everywhere but in man, consciousness has had to come to a stand; in man alone it has kept on its way. Man, then, continues the vital movement indefinitely, although he does not draw along with him all that life carries in itself. On other lines of evolution there have traveled other tendencies which life implied, and of which, since everything interpenetrates, man has, doubtless, kept something, but of which he has kept only very little. *It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, Man or Superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way.*¹⁷

As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organized beings, from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. All

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 263-266. Selected sentences.

the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death.¹⁸

However one may quarrel with, or fail to appreciate, Bergson's teleology, one cannot deny that the definite result of his view of evolution is to place the crown upon the head of man. Man is the goal, the very intention of creation, the finest flower of the organic process; and not only man the species, to which the individual is merely subordinate and secondary, but man the individual, since it is in the spiritual manifestations of his inner life that his superiority resides. We see, therefore, that our philosophy supports that faith which we have postulated as the second of the two necessary presuppositions of belief in individual immortality.

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But one or two statements in the quotations just given point to an even more positive con-

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 270-271.

clusion. One cannot overlook the phrase, "able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, *perhaps even death.*"¹⁹ Such statements must not be pressed too hard and indeed, as they stand, they do not necessarily imply belief in personal survival. They are, however, strictly compatible with such a faith. Further, more definite statements made by Bergson elsewhere, in an informal way, show that these sentences in *Creative Evolution* probably bore in his own mind at the time of writing a certain amount of individualistic interpretation. Let us glance at some of these informal observations.

If we can prove (as Bergson thinks he can) that the rôle of the brain is to fix the attention of the mind on matter and that by far the greater part of mental life is independent of the brain, then we have proved the likelihood of survival; and it is for those who do not believe it to prove that they are right, not for us to prove they are wrong.²⁰

On the other hand, when we see that consciousness, whilst being at once creation and choice, is also memory, that one of its essential functions is to accumulate and preserve the past, that very probably (I

¹⁹ The italics are mine.

²⁰ Bergson, quoted in the *Literary Digest*, March 1, 1913.

lack time to attempt the demonstration of this point) the brain is an instrument of forgetfulness as much as one of remembrance, and that in pure consciousness nothing of the past is lost, the whole of a conscious personality being an indivisible continuity, are we not led to suppose that the effort continues *beyond*, and that in this passage of consciousness through matter (the passage which at the tunnel's exit gives distinct personalities) consciousness is tempered like steel, and tests itself by clearly constituting personalities and preparing them, by the very effort which each of them is called upon to make, for a higher form of existence? If we admit that with man consciousness has finally left the tunnel, that everywhere else consciousness has remained imprisoned, that every other species corresponds to the arrest of something which in man succeeded in overcoming resistance and in expanding almost freely, thus displaying itself in true personalities capable of remembering all and willing all and controlling their past and their future, we shall have no repugnance in admitting that in man, though perhaps in man alone, consciousness pursues its path beyond this earthly life.²¹

A part of Levine's interview with Bergson runs as follows: ²²

²¹ Bergson, "Life and Consciousness," in the *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

²² Louis Levine, "Interview with Bergson," *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

The religious feeling, he (Bergson) thinks, not only connects the individual with the spiritual source of life, it creates in him the hope in the continuation of spiritual existence beyond. There is no reason, according to Professor Bergson, to deny the continuity of individual existence after death. The facts do not warrant such a conclusion. What we observe in death is the destruction of the material organism and of the brain. Now that would mean total spiritual destruction if the brain was commensurate with the totality of spiritual life. But it is not. What Professor Bergson believes to have proved is that the brain is but a part of the spiritual life of the mind.

Bergson thinks that the brain concentrates certain psychological processes necessary for action. It focuses the attention of the organism upon the material surroundings within which it has to move and to live. It is, therefore, limited and expresses only a part of the spiritual life. He holds that outside of it and independently of it there goes on a wider spiritual life in us—the life of the instincts, the life of the emotions, the life of vague aspiration and of infinite longing, and that life is not dependent upon the brain, and it must not disappear with the brain. There is the greatest probability that it continues as an individual spiritual existence after the brain has been destroyed.

Why is it improbable that this spiritual unity should continue to experience its connection with the

original source of life and to develop its own possibilities? Personally, Professor Bergson believes that it is not at all improbable. On the contrary, he has the feeling of certainty about it. He does not think, however, that the data at hand as yet warrant more than an affirmation of high probability.

This report is of great value in spite of its occasional crudeness and clumsiness of form.

Bergson has given the best evidence of his faith, or at least of his openmindedness, by accepting the presidency of the Society for Psychical Research. In his presidential address before the Society in London, he said,²²

The more we become accustomed to this idea of a consciousness which overflows the organism, the more natural and probable we find the hypothesis that the soul survives the body.

Were, indeed, the mental molded exactly on to the cerebral, were there nothing more in a human consciousness than what could be read in a human brain, we might have to admit that consciousness must share the fate of the body and die with it.

But if the facts, studied without any prepossessions, lead us on the contrary to regard the mental life as much more vast than the cerebral life, sur-

²² Quoted from a report in the *New York Times*, September 27, 1914.

vival becomes so probable that the burden of proof comes to lie on him who denies it rather than on him who affirms it.

For, as I have said elsewhere, "The one and only reason we can have for believing in an extinction of consciousness after death is that we see the body has become disorganized." And this reason no longer has any value, if the independence, however partial, of consciousness in regard to the body is also a fact of experience.

In spite of the encouragement which these remarks bring to us, we must not draw from them hasty and unwarranted conclusions regarding the relation of Bergson's philosophy, as such, to the problem of immortality. Carr points out clearly the status of the question on the basis of the philosophy of change.²⁴ After discussing the interrelations of spirit and matter, he continues:

The same considerations apply to the question of personal immortality. We have seen that it is possible to regard, nay that we must regard, the soul as a reality distinct in every respect from the body, the body being an extension, the soul a duration, and there is no single attribute which is common to

²⁴ H. Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, cf. pp. 193-195.

both. But then we have seen that it is only in action, and in the change which action implies, that the soul endures, and it is only in the solidarity of mind and body that action is known or conceivable. Consequently if we could give any meaning at all to the soul in entire separation from its activity in the body, we must in imagination supply something to take the place of the body. It certainly seems that mind exists quite apart from the particular circumstances of the organism in which its individual activity begins and ends, each at a definite moment, for life passes from one individual to another by means of the most slender material thread. It seems to have the power of concentrating itself in a germ which, when we judge it, as we needs must, by its mass, appears infinitely insignificant. Yet it also seems that this material continuity is absolutely essential in order that life and mind may pass from generation to generation. Consequently the difficulty there is in believing in personal immortality is much more a scientific than a philosophic difficulty. There is nothing inconceivable or inconsistent in the idea in the sense that it can be shown to be logically contradictory or metaphysically impossible. It is certainly impossible that the soul of an individual can exist as that individual apart from the body, because it is just that embodiment which constitutes the individuality. But it is quite possible to imagine, if we find it otherwise credible, that the miracle of a resurrection of the body may be a fact. Clearly it

would be vain to seek in philosophy the confirmation of such a belief, but also it would be beyond the sphere of philosophy to negate it. On the other hand, there is nothing in philosophy that positively indicates such a reality as an individual soul independent of the body, which enters it at birth and survives the body's dissolution, or which comes into existence at birth and retains that existence after death. The impulse of life that philosophy makes its special subject-matter is equally manifested in the lowest form of vegetable and animal existence as it is in the highest forms of intellectual and instinctive activity.

There is, however, one form (perhaps the most prevalent form) of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul which this philosophy does absolutely negate,—the theory of Plato that the soul is by its nature eternal in the sense that it is timeless and unchanging. According to this theory the soul is of like nature with God, from whom it emanates and to whom it returns. Like God, it is eternal and immortal in the sense that it persists unchanged. Our philosophy agrees that the soul is of like nature with God only if we understand God's nature to be the unceasing, ever-changing freedom of creative life. But there is one distinct ground of personal hope that this philosophy of change alone gives. We have seen that in the reality of a pure duration the past is preserved—preserved in its entirety. Now if this preservation of the past is a necessary attribute of

pure duration, then may it not be that some means exists, some may think must exist, by which life preserves those individual histories that seem to break their continuity at death? If it is not so there must be unaccountable waste in the universe, for almost every living form carries on an activity beyond the maturing of the germ and its transmission to a new generation. It would be in entire accordance with what we know if it should prove to be so, but we may never know. One thing is clear, the life-impulse bends us to the practical task of attention to life, and wide though our outlook is in comparison with other forms of activity, we are yet confined to an infinitely narrow view of the reality of which we are a part.

I have given this quotation rather at length, but purposely so. Carr is an out and out apostle of the philosophy of change and I wished to indicate here the direction Bergson's ideas are taking among at least some of his followers, especially in regard to the question of immortality. Some may think the result is disappointing. To me it is sobering, but not disappointing. We must not expect too much of philosophy. If we look to it to present us with a lively faith in the future life, we shall indeed be disappointed. But does that render useless

its efforts in this direction? I do not **think** so. Carr is evidently a little more "tough-minded" than Bergson but, nevertheless, even he goes beyond purely negative results. All that we have a right to expect from philosophy is that we shall gather momentum as we proceed along the track of reason so that when we reach the end of that track—and end it must, sooner or later—we may rise surely and triumphantly on the wings of faith into those regions whither reason can never penetrate but whence comes, through faith, a much needed inspiration for life. In other words, the future life is a thing to be believed in rather than a thing to be demonstrated. This does not mean a blind, unreasoning, or unreasonable faith, but it does mean faith.

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Now our conclusion with regard to Bergson is that he leaves us free to believe; nay more, he furnishes us with a basis which *encourages* us to believe. The general tendency of his thinking is spiritual and progressive and would seem to be more compatible with a Christian conception of life—whether here or beyond—than with any other. Charles holds that there

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are only two theories of the future life which are consistent with the Christian conception of God, namely, conditional immortality and universalism. Bergsonism is compatible with either view. "I have come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." So Christ taught of himself and so Bergson allows us, and even encourages us, to think of him, and that too whether we think of the more abundant life as here and now, or beyond the gates of death.

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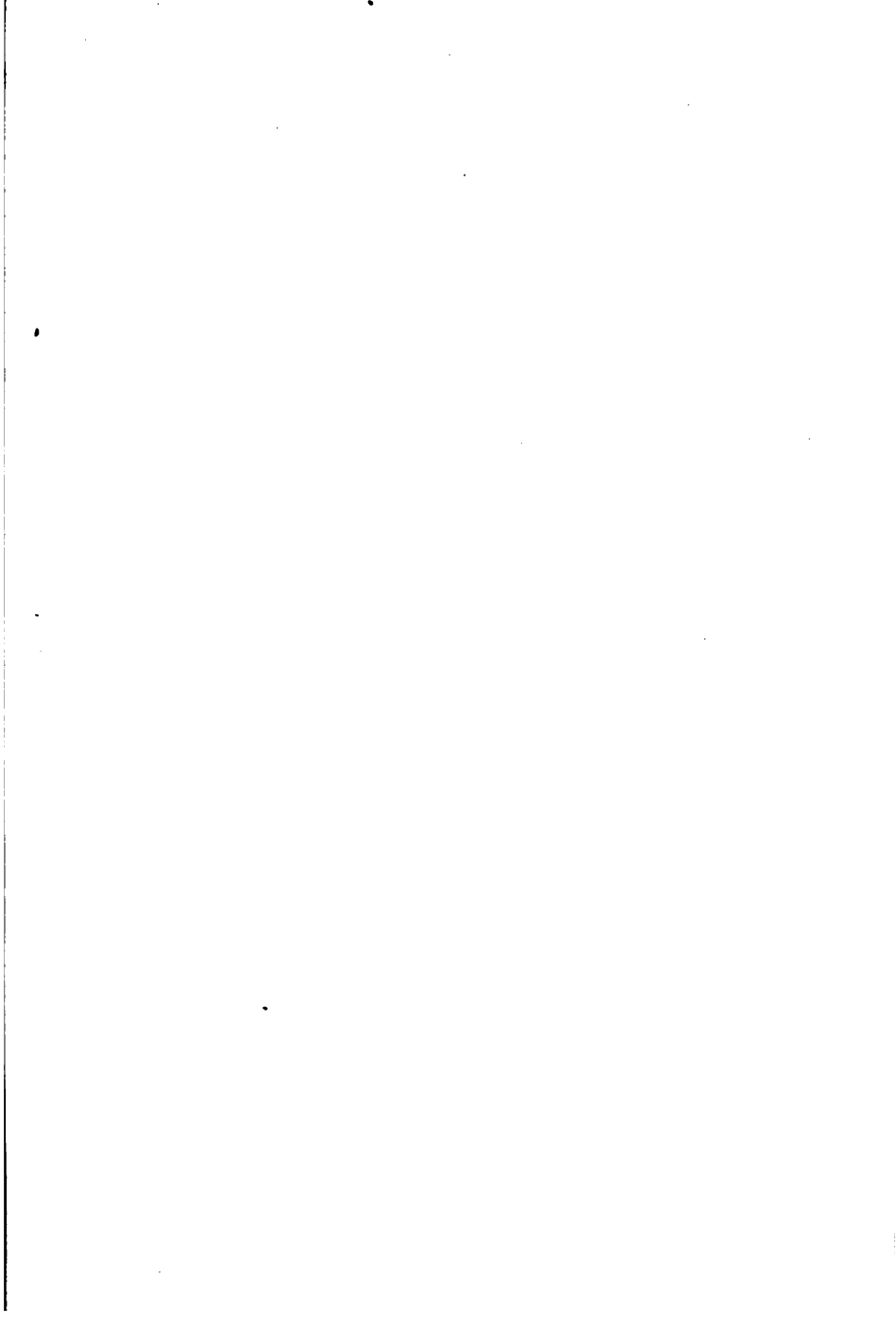
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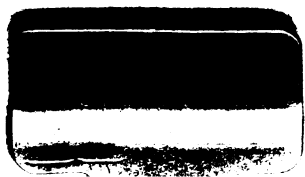
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